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CHARACTERISTICS

OF

LITERATURE,

ILLUSTRATED BY THE

Genius of Distinguished Men.

[First Series]

BY

HENRY T. TUCKERMAN.

AUTHOR OF "THE ITALIAN SKETCH-BOOK," "ISABEL, OR A PILGRIMAGE THROUGH SICILY," "THOUGHTS ON THE POETS," "ARTIST-LIFE," ETC.

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Preface.

The favorable reception of two previous attempts at a series of analytical portraits—one devoted to celebrated poets, and the other to some of our native painters—has induced the publication of this volume. Its design is to indicate the chief phases of the literary character. The subjects have been selected from their adaptation to this general plan, and with the hope that, at a time when the influence of Continental writers is so prevalent, a few illustrative criticisms drawn from the rich field of English literature, may prove acceptable.

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The Philosopher.

SIR THOMAS BROWNE.

THERE is something winsome as well as venerable in the character of the true philosopher. He, as well as the poet, derives his charter from nature. The term, in its best acceptation, not merely designates the adherents of a school of wisdom whether Stoical, Platonic, or Epicurean, but the man of liberal and inquiring mind, who habitually reasons upon facts, and to whom the pursuit of truth is an instinct, and its appreciation a keen delight. Next to the great bards, this race of men engage the affections; after the poetic, this phase of humanity is most noble. Approaches to the character are to be found in all good diarists and self-biographers—for such writings are but collections of personal incidents and thoughts more or less rich in philosophy. Montaigné is the prince of this species, and old Burton a fine example; but autobiographies, ingenuously composed, furnish the same kind of aliment, and betoken a like idiosyncrasy. Thus Rousseau, Goldoni, Alfieri, Cellini, and Boswell, have contributed invaluable materials towards the science of life, by disclosing, with honesty and

acumen, psychological histories. One of the most interesting specimens of the genuine philosopher in the annals of literature, is Sir Thomas Browne. His candour, scope, and kindliness, united with bravery of thought and originality of expression, make his works attractive beyond any other of the old English prose writers. The bulk of the writings of Sir Thomas Browne are curious rather than of practical value; but their indirect utility is greater than a casual view of their ostensible design would suggest. A vast amount of quaint knowledge, a vein of original speculation, and a loftiness of conception as well as waywardness of fancy, fix the mind to the page whither the quaint title attracts it. The "Enquiries into Vulgar Errors" are the result of years of observation and study; "Christian Morals" forms an epitome of religious maxims which would do credit to the best of the old English Divines; "Urn Burial," suggested by the discovery of some ancient urns at Norfolk, in 1658, is an essay as remarkable for its accurate learning as for the melancholy charm with which his devout imagination invested the theme. "The Garden of Cyrus" is like an antique horticultural poem; and the very titles of the tracts and letters, breathe of eccentric genius. The mention of one will suffice: "On the Fishes eaten by our Saviour and his disciples, after his resurrection from the dead." His alleged belief in witchcraft has been derided, but this is evidently one of those subjects upon which he indulges his fancy rather than his reason, and to which he al-

ludes in the preface to his most famous work: "There are many things delivered rhetorically, many expressions therein merely tropical, as they best illustrate my meaning, and therefore to be taken in a soft and flexible sense, and not to be called unto the rigid test of reason." The "Letter to a Friend" is a noble offering of personal sympathy and an eloquent illustration of religious philosophy. But the work that has the advantage of voluntary, in distinction to professional, authorship, and that emanated most directly from his consciousness, is the private compendium of individual faith, which became renowned soon after being published under the title of Religio Medici: it is the most true and elaborate reflection of himself; and we therefore adopt it as the basis of our remarks upon the character of philosopher—his native claim to which it amply sustains.

There is an order of minds that cannot take life in a jovial or compromising spirit; "nobler ever than their mood," some faith, hope or principle is needful to preserve their equanimity. They must see things as they are, pluck out the heart of each mystery, and come face to face with truth, though it be sad, condemnatory or hopeless. Poets escape outward evil through their imaginations, philosophers by their reason. The one arrays reality in the hues of fancy, the other analyzes it in the crucible of thought; and, through combination or inference, attains comfort. Perhaps the most characteristic resource of the latter is a settled conviction that benign, universal, and in-

evitable laws obtain not only in nature, but in the vicissitudes of human life and the issues of human destiny. As the astronomer serenely confides in the starry evolutions and the mariner in the needle's inclination, the philosopher trusts to the wise and kindly results both of events and action. He is comparatively patient at successful charlatanism because his "faith is large in time and that which shapes it to some perfect end." He observes society not for its apparent and immediate, but for its actual and ultimate tendencies. His calm eye pierces to the inward fact undimmed by the atmosphere of circumstances. He is a natural eclectic, drawing from each system, character, and party its true and desirable element, and uniting them into a harmonious whole. In human intercourse, he feels assured that genuine affinity, in point of fact, regulates society; in external occurrences he looks beyond the seeming fortune to the relation it bears to individual character; and for higher truth, strives by integrity and humble patience, to keep ever in a recipient state.

"There is no liberty," says our author, "for causes to operate in a loose and straggling way, nor any effect whatsoever but hath its warrant from some universal or superior cause. It is we that are blind, not fortune; because our eye is too dim to discover the mystery of her effects, we foolishly paint her blind, and hoodwink the providence of the Almighty. This cryptick and involved method of his providence have I ever admired, nor can I relate the history of

my life, the occurrences of my days, the escapes of dangers and the hits of chance, with a Bezo las Manos to fortune, or a bare gramercy to my good stars."

The habitude of observation, the recognition of the world as a suggestive as well as a merely physical sphere; the consciousness of life as an experience full of significance, is everywhere obvious in Browne. "The world," he says, "was made to be inhabited by beasts, but studied and contemplated by man; it is the debt of our reason we owe unto God and the homage we pay for not being beasts. The wisdom of God receives small honour from those vulgar heads that rudely stare about, and with a gross rusticity admire his works; those highly magnify him whose judicious inquiry into his acts and deliberate research into his creatures, return the duty of a devout and learned admiration. To raise so beauteous a structure as the world and the creatures thereof, was but his art, but their sundry and divided operations with their predestined ends, are from the treasury of his wisdom."

The philosopher's spirit of inquiry is as comprehensive as it is habitual, ranging from science to art, from life to nature, from books to consciousness. His pleasure is to generalize. When the principle of a subject, the central point of a character, the absolute significance of a number of circumstances is attained, he experiences a profound satisfaction. Truth is to the intellect what love is to the heart—its food, object and inspiration; and they who thus seek and

delight in her revelations are, by nature, philosophers. The zest of life to them is to approximate to reality through a wilderness of appearances, and in saying that they best vindicate the integrity of the mind, we mean that to them the mind is an instrument of usefulness, happiness and honour—instead of a bewildering gift, an aimless interrogation, or a mere lumber-room of fragmentary ideas. A great characteristic of the true philosopher is independence. He is above prejudice; and the habit of viewing every question in its connexion with absolute truth, opens his mind to conviction however opposed to former opinion. Indeed, the ostensible creed in religion and school of literature, or party in politics to which such men are attached, serve rather as vantage-grounds than limits—as the particular brigade in which the true soldier is enrolled is a convenient arrangement for eliciting his activity in the cause for which he wages battle, rather than an exclusive coterie, beyond which his sympathies or conceptions cannot wander. A certain foothold of conservatism is absolutely necessary even for the most speculative thinker. Whatever be the goal of thought it must have a starting point, and beyond what is positive and defined in a philosopher's data of belief, he has a faith of his own rather instinctive than specific—a vague, perhaps, yet actual trust in certain grand and universal principles or ultimate results, which does not contradict but sustains the particular formula to which he gives open allegiance. In truth it is this very union of reliance upon

broad principles and general views with the recognition of particular dogmas, which distinguishes the disciple from the sectarian in religion, the statesman from the partisan in politics, the liberal from the prejudiced in society, and the truly philosophic from the pedantic in mind.

The spirit of inquiry and good powers of reasoning are not, however, the only essential qualifications of the philosopher. These may serve him in material acquisitions, but uninspired by high emotions, unquickened by imaginative perception, they cannot bear the mind beyond the limits of the actual. Like the dying Cleopatra, unless there be "immortal longings," philosophy is bereft of its hope. Sir Thomas Browne regarded his acquired knowledge as the basis not the limit of research. His experiments foretold a yet more satisfactory analysis. He found in character chiefly promise, in events discipline, in nature hints—all suggestive of more completeness and satisfaction. The best fact of his own consciousness was a supernal trust, a sense of glorious affinity. Hence his self-respect, his disregard of the temporary, his instinctive repose upon the bosom of nature. He was an aspirant, and therefore not only saw the footsteps of truth in his path, but sometimes caught glimpses of her wings through an opening cloud. He confesses to so "abject a conceit of this common way of existence, this retaining to the sun and the elements," that he "cannot think this to be a man or to live according to the dignity of humanity." * * *

And again: "Since I was of understanding to know we know nothing, my reason has been more pliable to the will of faith. * * * Where the soul hath the full measure and complement of happiness; where the boundless appetite of that spirit remains completely satisfied, that I can neither desire addition nor alteration, that I think is truly heaven. * * * I would not entertain a base design or an action that should call me villain for the Indies; and for this only do I love and honour my own soul, and have, methinks, two arms too few to embrace myself." * * * He was conscious of an inlet of truth above reason, for he observes, "it is but attending a little longer and we shall enjoy that by instinct and infusion which we endeavour at here by labour and inquisition."

Among the merely individual characteristics of Sir Thomas Browne, was his love of music; of which he says "there is something of divinity in it more than the ear discovers;" and his irreverence for antiquity merely as such. There is much to confirm his fanciful idea of a "revived self," or reappearance of forms of character. Are we not often struck with the marvellous similarity between intimate acquaintances and historical personages? Who has not known women whose brilliant wit and turn for the ambitious intrigues of social life, recalled the ladies of the Court of Louis XIV? Some constitutions are decidedly oriental in their needs and aptitudes, though born in a northern latitude. Tendencies for particular modes of life exhibit themselves under circumstances which breathe

neither a memory or hope in the same direction. A single member of a family will develope traits wholly at variance with the manners and tone of feeling around. These and similar instances seem to point to an ancestral vein working itself obliquely forth, to an Arethusa-like reappearance of some quality of blood or gift of soul, that has long wandered under oblivious waters to incarnate itself at a time and place the most unexpected. Therefore well says our philosopher, "Every man is not himself; there have been many Diogenes, and as many Timons, though but few of that name; men are lived over again."

It is remarkable that the men whose relish for books is the most keen—who read sympathetically, not merely to store the memory and weave ties of familiar and endearing association with beloved authors—should invariably repudiate the idea of an extensive library. One can name the volumes essential to the comfort of such men as Hazlitt and Shelley. Thinkers do not require books for the information they convey so much as mental stimulants and faithful companions. They can generate ideas for themselves, and take up a volume as they turn to a friend, for the refreshment of sympathy or attrition of mind. Sir Thomas Browne fully shared in this love of the cream of literature, and was impatient at the multiplication of books. "Of those three great inventions in Germany, there are two which are not without their incommodities, and 'tis disputable whether they exceed not their use

and commodities. 'Tis not a melancholy utinam of mine own, but the desires of better heads, that there were a general synod; not to unite the incompatible difference of religion, but for the benefit of learning; to reduce it as it lay at first in a few and solid authors, and to condemn to the fire those swarms and millions of rhapsodies begotten only to distract and abuse the weaker judgments of scholars and to maintain the trade and mystery of typographers."

Montaigne compares authorship with the act of pouring water from one vessel to another; and the reproduction of old materials in new forms is illustrated by all the brilliant achievement of modern literature. We do not, however, so fully realize the identity whenever evolved, of all true principles, and the innate resemblance of all philosophic observers of life and nature. It has been well said that the Sermon on the Mount was an announcement, not a creation of truth. The pure in heart did not become blessed on account of the Saviour's benediction. It was and is a great moral fact that they are so. Harvey's theory of the circulation of the blood is spoken of as a discovery; but the law, though unrecognised, existed from the moment that a pulse quivered in the wrist of Adam. We have spoken of Sir Thomas Browne as a type of the genuine philosopher; and adapting the ingenious transcript of his mind, written for private satisfaction at the age of

thirty, first surreptitiously published in 1642,* as his creed, confession or theory of life, it is curious to note how many ideas which, within a few years, have become prominently embodied as original—were noted by him as familiar and personal conceptions. The most cherished of the Swedenborgian doctrines brought comfort to his soul. We find a hint of the law of correspondencies in this passage: "The seven schools shall never laugh me out of the philosophy of Hermes, that this visible world is but a picture of the invisible, wherein as in a portrait, things are not truly but in equivocal shapes, and as they counterfeit some more real substance in that invisible fabric." And that he recognised somewhat the new church view of the spiritual world, is evident from such observations as these: "I hold that the devil doth really possess some men, the spirit of melancholy others, the spirit of delusion others; that as the devil is concealed and denied by some, so God and good angels are pretended by others, whereof the late detection of the maid of Germany hath left a pregnant example. * * * I do think that many mysteries ascribed to our own inventions have been the courteous revelations of spirits, for those noble essences in heaven bear a friendly regard to their fellow-natures on earth. * * * Therefore, for spirits, I am so far from denying their existence, that I could easily believe that not only

* The Religio Medici.

whole countries, but particular persons have their tutelary or guardian angels." His idea of the nature of these beings is equally significant. "I believe they have an extemporary knowledge, and upon the first motion of their reason do what we cannot without study and deliberation; that they know things by their forms, and define by special difference what we describe by accidents and properties; and therefore probabilities to us may be demonstrations to them."

Lavater and Spurzheim have identified their memories with a theory of expression or natural language. A speculative germ of this science was obviously in the brain of Sir Thomas Browne. "The finger of God," he says, "hath left an inscription on all his works, not graphical or composed of letters, but of their several forms, constitution, parts, and operations, which aptly joined together do make one word that doth express their natures. And truly I have observed that those professed eleemosynaries, though in a crowd or multitude, do yet direct and place their petitions on a few and selected persons; there is surely a physiognomy which those experienced and master mendicants observe, whereby they instantly discover a merciful aspect; for there are mystically in our faces certain characters which carry in them the motto of our souls." One of the most popular books of the day is "Proverbial Philosophy," and one of the most effective of its chapters is that devoted to compensation. In the Religio Medici we have

an eloquent suggestion in the identical vein. "'Tis, I confess, the common fate of men of singular gifts of mind, to be destitute of those of fortune, which doth not in any way deject the spirit of wiser judgments, who thoroughly understand the justice of this proceeding, and being enriched with higher donatives cast a more careless eye on those vulgar parts of felicity. 'Tis not partiality but equity in God, who deals with us but as our natural parents; those that are able of body and mind he leaves to their deserts, to those of weaker merits he imparts a larger portion, and pieces out the defect of one by the excess of another." Self-reliance has been the favourite doctrine of recent writers. Carlyle, Channing, Emerson and others urge it on every occasion with ingenuity and eloquence. Sir Thomas Browne is not a less determined, though more concise advocate. "We carry," he declares, "with us the wonders we seek; there is all Africa and her prodigies in us; we are that bold and adventurous piece of nature, which he that studies wisely learns in a compendium what others labour at in a divided piece and an endless volume."

The cardinal points of faith to every sensitive thinker are, that life is only realized through a complete exercise of mind and heart, and that there is an enduring and progressive principle in the soul which makes this just activity infinitely desirable. This has been finely uttered by the author of the Religio Medici. "There is surely a piece of divinity

in us, something that was before the elements and owes no homage unto the sun. Every man truly lives so long as he acts his nature, or in some way makes good the faculties of himself."

Long ago the Mantuan poet wrote "Felix qui potuit rerum cognoscere causas"—a phrase which lingers in the memory of every reader who has a large organ of causality, although the rest of his knowledge of Latin has evaporated. And why is he happy who knows the causes of things? Because the selfish instincts attribute a personal and direct motive to conduct which is regulated by feelings of far more intense and extensive scope; because the end often justifies the means; and the breadth and sincerity of a purpose may suggest temporary expedients, which, viewed by themselves, are wholly unsatisfactory. "Circumstances alter cases," is an old proverb. The philosopher differs from the vulgar in the extent as well as the acuteness of his vision. "I have," says Sir Thomas, "one common and authentic philosophy I learned in the schools, whereby I discourse and satisfy the reason of other men: another more reserved, and drawn from experience, whereby I content mine own." The most objectionable of modern tyrannies is that of the press. In the United States, boasting the greatest political freedom at present enjoyed, a man who can purchase a few types may assail effectually the reputation of his neighbour, who, were he to utter the same scandal, would be amenable socially to the laws of honour;

and jurisprudence has provided no sufficient remedy for libel. In the preface to the very treatise we are now considering, it is said :—"Had not almost every man suffered by the press, or were not the tyranny therefore become universal, I had not wanted reason for complaint; but in times wherein I have lived to behold the highest perversion of that excellent invention, complaints may seem ridiculous in private persons, and men of my condition may be as incapable of affronts as hopeless of their reparation." The idea of progress has become so general and intense, that it has degenerated into cant. How manfully it is recognised in our author's introduction of his work! "It" (the Religio) "was set down many years past, and was the sense of my conceptions at that time, not an immutable law unto my advancing judgment at all times; and therefore there might be many things plausible unto my past apprehension which are not agreeable unto my present self."

An axiom of late metaphysicians is the sufficiency of the mind and conscience independent of outward well-being; and to repose on our own consciousness is defined by not a few as the test of harmonious development. Sir Thomas Browne yielded the "private station," not from any restless love of fame, but through the presence of external inducements. "Had not the duty I owe unto the importunity of friends, and the allegiance I must ever acknowledge unto truth, prevailed with me, the inactivity of my disposition might have made these

sufferings continual; and time, that brings other things to light, should have satisfied me in the remedy of its oblivion."

In his personal history there is little either adventurous or peculiar. He was born in London, in St. Michael's Parish, Cheapside, October 19th, 1605; and educated at Winchester School and Oxford. In his youth he travelled extensively, and the reminiscences of this period, which incidentally appear in his treatises, evince the constant exercise of liberal curiosity in regard to the arts and manners of different localities. He remained for the longest intervals at Montpelier and Padua—the two most celebrated schools of medicine then existing in Europe. He took a degree at Leyden; and finally settled at Norwich, where he died at the age of seventy-six.

Of minor facts relating to his career, there is the usual paucity which attends the life of a scholar. He was knighted by Charles II., and during the political commotions of the age, lived apart, occupied with his books, experiments and domestic enjoyments. It is interesting to know that he was visited by Evelyn. Of his family, little has been recorded. One of his sons distinguished himself as a brave sailor in the navy; and another became celebrated as a physician, and is mentioned as in attendance on the deathbed of Rochester. Of the daughter's character, we may form an idea by a single trait which is preserved of her,—that "she loved to be alone"—a disposition indicative of the philosophical temperament of her

father, whose memory she appears to have deeply venerated.

It is said that the wits of the day made themselves quite merry on the occasion of our philosopher's marriage, deeming the event altogether inconsistent with his avowed preference of celibacy and his wish that mankind might "procreate like trees." Their view of the subject was exceedingly narrow. Sir Thomas Browne acted, as well as wrote, upon honest conviction. He never professed what he did not believe; and was above the vanity of claiming any sentiment, however beautiful, or following any custom, however approved, the sanction of which he had never experienced. When the Religio Medici was written, his innate love had not been called forth, because he did not encounter its appropriate object. He was singularly true to himself, and never forced or perverted nature, but listened reverently for her spontaneous oracles; when these revealed to him what Croly finely calls "passion made essential," he obeyed its impulse. That it was on the principle of genuine sympathy that he entered upon this relation, is evident from the testimony of Whitefoot, who says: "In 1641, he married a lady of such symmetrical proportions to her worthy husband, that they seemed to come together by a kind of natural magnetism."

There is a cynical tone in Dr. Johnson's Life of Sir Thomas Browne, and its injustice is only countenanced by the adverse spirit manifested in the extracts from Whitefoot—his intimate friend, whose cordial enco-

miums are obviously as truthful as they are affectionate. The philosopher's character, as thus delineated, seems to accord perfectly with the kindliness and serene wisdom of his writings. Among other characteristics which they suggest, and which his biographer confirms, are such a thorough modesty that he never lost "an habitual blush," simplicity of dress, household and social liberality, parsimonious only of his time; and a patience "founded upon a Christian philosophy and sound faith in God."

An unreasonable draft is often made upon the conversational powers of men of reflection. Their acquaintances are impatient at their silence. They are expected at all times to be entertaining; and to hold themselves in readiness to be called out for the diversion of the company—as Chinese jugglers go through their antics. Lighter minds do not seem to realize that occasional silence is to such men as necessary as sleep; and that the reason they talk well at all, is because a certain amount of thinking precedes their utterance. Sir Thomas Browne seems to have regulated his intercourse upon rational principles. "He was excellent company," we are told, "with more light than heat in the temper of his brain; sometimes difficult to be engaged in discourse, but always singular therein, never trite or vulgar." Strong passions form an essential part of a vigorous character; and we question the system which deems virtue to consist in their utter denial. The constitution of man indicates their wise regulation—not their entire subver-

sion as the desirable process. This we suppose to be the kind of self-control ascribed to our philosopher. "He had no *despotical* power over his affections and passions, but as large a *political* power over them as any stoic."

There is an economy of animal spirits whereby the buoyancy of the feelings may be indefinitely prolonged. The thoughtless usually suffer despondency from the reaction instead of the absence of natural gaiety. The reflective, on the contrary, know how to prize the prolonged ripple of the stream above the temporary gush of the fountain; and we are not, therefore, surprised at the declaration of a contemporary, that the mood of Sir Thomas was "cheerful rather than merry."

The style of Sir Thomas Browne may be thought to lack grace by those whose taste has been exclusively formed upon the more polished models of a later day. There is, however, a rare charm in its grave and sincere flow. We feel that a manly soul expresses itself by the very vigour of the phrases. It is an honest style, unmarred by daintiness or affectation. Some words are obsolete, some paragraphs introverted; but a majestic simplicity like that of Milton, quaint and fanciful comparisons, such as besprinkle the homilies of Jeremy Taylor, and a dignified and conscious rectitude of tone—the robust manliness of the age of Elizabeth—give energy and attractiveness to almost every page. One of his editors aptly calls him "a stately Montaigne." A

selection of aphorisms would best illustrate Sir Thomas Browne's style.

For philosophical writing we can imagine no more appropriate diction. Take, for instance, a few of his striking illustrations of the insufficiency of knowledge —how clear, ingenious, yet effective is the language: "For my own part beside the jargon and patois of several provinces, I understand no less than six languages; yet I protest I have no higher conceit of myself than had our fathers *before the construction of Babel, when there was but one language in the world*, and none to boast himself either linguist or critic. I have not only seen several countries, beheld the nature of their climes, the chiography of their provinces, topography of their cities, but understood their several laws, customs, and policies; yet cannot all this persuade the dulness of my spirit unto such an opinion of myself, as I behold in nimbler and conceited heads that *never looked a degree beyond their nests.* I know the names, and somewhat more, of all the constellations of my horizon; yet I have seen a prating mariner that could only name the pointers and the north star, out-talk me, and *conceit himself a whole sphere above me.* I know most of the plants of my country, and of those about me; yet methinks I do not know so many as when I did but know a hundred, and had *scarcely ever simpled further than Cheapside.*"

In more rhetorical passages, there is like absence of all the tricks of fine writing, and a dignified ease

that rises to eloquence as it were unawares. What can be more devout in feeling or earnest in profession than the following? "I am sure there is a common spirit that plays within us, yet makes no part of us; and that is the Spirit of God, the fire and scintillation of that noble and mighty essence, which is the life and radical heat of spirits, and those essences that know not the virtue of the sun; a fire quite contrary to the fire of hell. This is that gentle heat that brooded on the waters, and in six days hatched the world; this is that irradiation that dispels the mists of hell, the clouds of horror, fear, sorrow, despair; and preserves the region of the mind in serenity; whosoever feels not the warm gale and gentle ventilation of this spirit, (though I feel his pulse,) I dare not say he lives; for truly without this, to me there is no heat under the tropic, nor any light, though I dwelt in the body of the sun."

There is a class of independent thinkers who vindicate the integrity of the human mind. Genius works mysteriously; her children often seem unconscious agents rather than voluntary creators. There is a feverish unrest, a spasmodic vitality in their mental being, which leads the calm observer of life to consider their destiny quite undesirable. A deep melancholy broods over their highest triumphs; their course though glorious is erratic, and a sense of misplaced feeling, incomplete humanity—of a peculiarity which isolates while it distinguishes—a gift that dooms at the same time that it enriches—assures us

that even great endowments have their attendant shadows. Schiller with all his admiration of Goethe was repelled by his systematic egotism. He could not love him as he wished, because of that determined self-concentration which, while it did not check benevolence, kept back ever the most precious of gifts—himself. And with all Schiller's own generosity—a disturbing element so marred the serenity of his consciousness, that he welcomed death, because as it approached, he felt "calmer and calmer." The practical insight of Macaulay recognised the inevitable contingency, to which we allude, when he passes from the men of action to the poets—declaring of the latter, as Dr. Johnson did of the whole human race, that they are never wholly sane. An overplus of the imaginative faculty leads to an erroneous estimate of actual things; keen sensibilities barb the arrows of life; and habits of constant reflection give a morbid hue to the most ordinary experience; and yet one or the other of those characteristics belongs by nature, to the class we designate as men of genius. So generally admitted is this fact that we instinctively separate the products of such minds from the individuals; we enjoy their works, but deem the authors but partially reliable. It is as if what is really true and healthy in them instead of appearing in life—as is the law of human nature in general—embodied itself in a form of art—leaving the man somewhat deficient, perplexed or weakened in his relations to the actual—as the pearl is bred at the

expense of vitality and the flame of combustion. Perhaps the tender reverence in which noble souls hold this species of men, springs, in a measure, from pity, as chivalry towards women is occasioned by a sense of their weakness as well as admiration of their charms. Doubtless works of absolute genius are the greatest evidences of the power and enduring destiny of the human mind; but in their very nature—they spring from the excess of a special development—from overflowing sensibility—profound reflection or exuberant fancy. The true felicity of intellectual life—the mind that is a kingdom in the sense of the brave old English poet—in a word, sufficient by its integrity and genial resources—is not so well illustrated by men of remarkable genius, as by those of more balanced powers and catholic tastes, who observe as much as they reflect, and are capable of finding mental pabulum in the ordinary course of life and the regular transitions of nature.

The freedom and insight of the true philosopher induces nobility of soul; and this is beautifully manifest in the character of Sir Thomas Browne. His charity is all-embracing, and a sense of the natural dignity of man endeared to his heart the lowliest of the race. Self, through the breadth of his calm wisdom, "passed in music out of sight." Charles Lamb said of books, that Shaftesbury was not too fine for him nor Tom Jones too low. Thus Sir Thomas regarded men, discerning ever a redeeming feature or ground of interest. He could scarce retain his prayers for a friend at the

ringing of a bell; and declares himself of a "constitution so general, that it consorts and sympathizes with all things." It would be difficult to find in the whole range of English literature a more humane and generous utterance than that contained in the opening of the second part of the Religio Medici. It is a quaint elaboration of the maxim of Terence, and a prosaic expression of Burns', "a man's a man for a' that." How noble his sentiments in regard to mental acquirements, and in what pitiful contrast appears the miser-like economy of ideas which narrows the converse of modern authors! "I intend no monopoly, but a community in learning; I study not for my own sake only, but for theirs who study not for themselves. I envy no man who knows more than myself, but pity them that know less. I instruct no man as an exercise of my knowledge, or with an intent rather to keep alive in mine own head than beget and propagate it in his; and in the midst of all my endeavours there is but one thought that dejects me, that my acquired parts must perish with myself, nor can be legacied among my honoured friends." These noble sympathies which distinguish the genuine philosophic character, are not at all incompatible with discrimination of taste and individuality of feeling. Perhaps they throw the mind more directly back upon primal resources and detach conscious identity from outward relations more thoroughly than sympathies apparently less diffuse. This "general and indifferent temper" in Browne,

was allied to marked peculiarities both of disposition and opinion. He was no radical believer in human equality as the phrase is generally regarded. He had gone too near the heart of nature not to have faith in what he terms "a nobility without heraldry;" and, like all thoughtful observers, was sceptical as to the miracles attributed to education and circumstances in their influence on character. What deserves that name he thought inborn, original and prevailing; and hence deemed it a "happiness to grow up from the seeds of nature, rather than the inoculation and enforced graft of education."

Sir Thomas Browne knew how to reconcile fidelity in detail with expansive views. Opinion plumed instead of clipping the wings of his thought. He felt that in all the facts of humanity there was a germ at least of truth, which sanctioned to his eye even her incongruous aspects and superstitious errors. He begins his confession of faith by announcing himself a Christian, but adds that pity rather than hate fills his heart towards Turks, Infidels, and Jews,—"rather contenting myself to enjoy that happy style, than maligning those who refuse so glorious a title." In accordance with this spirit he thought "a resolved conscience could adore her Creator anywhere;" that "it is the method of charity to suffer without reaction," and that "there is yet, after all the decrees of councils and the niceties of the schools, many things untoucht, unimagined, wherein the liberty of

an honest reason may play and expatiate with security."

The pursuit of truth, not the attainment of an ideal, the knowledge of the actual rather than the enjoyment of the illusive, is the aim of such minds. The ruling passion is liberal curiosity. They question the facts of each day not to force them into the support of a cherished theory, or to exaggerate and embellish them by the light of their own imagination, but simply to assay them in the balance of truth, to glean from them whatever genuine import they afford, or arrange them among unexplained problems for future combination and inference. The mental position ordained by this very constitution is that of inquiry. The truth attained is only one of a series of progressive convictions which, like the different elevations of a mountain range, open new and successive vistas. The philosopher does not climb the heights of knowledge to collect rare pebbles to arrange into brilliant pictures for immediate effect, as Sheridan gathered fragments of wit for his comedies and figures for his rhetoric; nor to pick wild flowers for elegiac garlands, such as Gray wove to cast on the sepulchre; but to reach a more bracing atmosphere, behold more vast prospects, and draw nearer to the stars!

The Dilettante.

SHENSTONE.

A FRIEND of mine recently purchased, at auction, an old copy of Shenstone. It is illustrated with a portrait and frontispiece representing some kind of aquatic bird peering up from among the reeds, by the side of a little waterfall. There is an eulogistic preface by Dodsley, several pages of tributary verse, and a map of the bard's rural paradise. The care bestowed upon the work, indicates the estimation in which Shenstone was held by his contemporaries; and it is a singular evidence of the mutation of taste to compare these effusions with the order of poetry now in vogue. There is a class of readers who deem the praises lavished upon the modern English poets extravagant; who are impatient at Talfourd's refined analysis of Wordsworth, and Jeffrey's laudation of Campbell. If such cavillers would glance at the volumes before us, and note how tamely the changes are rung on Damons, Melissas, Philomels and Cynthias,—how Phœbus is invoked and Delia dawdled over; what rhymes elegiac wind along as if, like Banquo's issue, they would stretch to the crack of doom,—and then turn to the spirited apostrophes of Byron, or the exquisite sentiment of Tennyson, they

would feel, by the force of contrast, what a glorious revolution has taken place in English poetry. Nothing can appear more flat than many of Shenstone's pathetic verses. They are written usually in that sing-song, die-away measure, of which "Pity the sorrows of a poor old man" is the everlasting type. Here and there a happy epithet or well-chosen image relieves the insipidity of the strain; but in general a thorough Laura-Matildaish tone, so admirably satirised in "Rejected Addresses," palls upon the ear with a dulcet but senseless monotone:

> "Where is Cupid's crimson motion?
> Billowy ecstasy of wo!
> Bear me straight, meandering ocean,
> Where the stagnant torrents flow."

The best verses of the occasional poems, are such as these:

> "O may that genius, which secures my rest,
> Preserve this villa for a friend that's dear,
> Ne'er may my vintage glad the sordid breast,
> Ne'er tinge the lip that dares be insincere.

> Thou knowest how transport thrills the tender breast,
> Where love and fancy fix their opening reign;
> How nature shines in holier colours drest,
> To bless their union, and to grace their train.

> Let Ceylon's envy'd plant perfume the seas,
> 'Till torn to season the Batavian bowl;
> Ours is the breast whose genuine ardours please,
> Nor need a drug to meliorate the soul."

Such is the usual strain of Shenstone. Did space allow, we would extract the Ballad of Nancy of the Vale, to contrast it with "Poor Susan;" and the "Dying Kid" with the "White Doe of Rylstone," in order to illustrate what a reaction from the extreme of artificial pathos to the heart of nature, modern poetical genius has undergone; or we would place the "Jemmy Dawson" of Shenstone beside Hood's "Dream of Eugene Aram," to make palpable to the dullest intellect, how the more sympathetic and enlightened humanity of later bards, has thrown a true moral sadness around crime. It is the same in poems of the affections. What fresh and natural life renders Barry Cornwall's love songs instinct with vital beauty, and how real appears the earnestness of Mrs. Hemans, notwithstanding the monotony of her strain! Shenstone's memorable production is "The Schoolmistress"—a sketch drawn minutely from life, and in versification and style, imitated closely from Spenser. It is one of those characteristic and truthful pictures of real life, which artistically, yet naturally executed, like Goldsmith's "Deserted Village," and "Gray's Elegy," has a permanent niche in the temple of the British muses. It is curious, with the sweet fancifulness of the Fairy Queen, the lofty idealism and elegiac pathos of Shelley's Adonais, or the rhetorical energy and intense picturesqueness of Childe Harold, present in the mind, to turn to the simple imagery of the same stanza in the "Schoolmistress." The whole

description is said to have been taken, to the veriest details, from the old dame who taught Shenstone in infancy; and we copy three of the first stanzas as examples of humble description in Spenserian verse, as well as to give a fair idea of the tenor of this favourite household poem:

"And all in sight doth rise a birchen tree,
Which leaning near her little dome did grow;
Whilom a twig of small regard to see,
Tho' now so wide its waving branches flow;
And work the simple vassals mickle wo;
For not a wind might curl the leaves that blew,
But their limbs shuddered, and their pulse beat low;
And as they look'd they found their horror grew,
And shaped it into rods, and tingled at the view.

"One ancient hen she took delight to feed,
The plodding pattern of the busy dame;
Which, ever and anon, impelled by need,
Into her school, begirt with chickens came,
Such favour did her past deportment claim;
And, if neglect had lavished on the ground
Fragments of bread, she would collect the same;
For well she knew, and quaintly could expound,
What sin it were to waste the smallest crumb she found.

"Herbs too she knew, and well of each could speak,
That in her garden sipped the silvery dew;
Where no vain flower disclosed a gaudy streak,
But herbs for use, and physick, not a few
Of gray renown, within those borders grew:
The tufted basil, pun-provoking thyme,
Fresh baum, and marygold of cheerful hue;
The lowly gill, that never dares to climb;
And more I fain would sing, disdaining here to rhyme."

It is almost unprecedented for a poet to be remembered for his abode, and yet such is the case with Shenstone. His writings are so intimately associated with his residence, that we seldom recur to one without thinking of the other. In his day, landscape gardening was a novelty; and his adornment of his paternal inheritance gratified at once his taste, his indolence, and his ambition.

Yet how far removed from the true principles of rural art were his ideas, may be realized by contrasting the petty artifices to which he resorted with the truly noble results of landscape gardening achieved by our own accomplished professor * of this beautiful and useful science. There is a prettiness but no scope in his poetry, as there was fancy but no comprehensive plan in the decoration of his grounds. In both he illustrated the artificiality of his day. His once celebrated abode is now only to be recognised by a lawn and a bridge which yet remain. All that is pleasing is the general view. Quakers halt there for refreshment, returning from Stonebridge meeting to Birmingham. This is an amusing coincidence, for no reader except one of the subdued taste of these "calm brethren" would ever think, while journeying about Parnassus, of halting to refresh themselves with the poems of Shenstone.

To an American eye, the charm of European

* A. J. Downing.

gardens is rather owing to the novelty of their natural productions than the style of their arrangement. The grand scale of our scenery renders all tricks paltry by comparison; and the artificial substitutes for natural diversity give a scenic rather than a picturesque effect. The elegance of Versailles is apparent and unrivalled; but this quality rather offends than delights when applied to external nature. At Rome, the clipped, dense evergreens, weather-stained marbles, and humid alleys of the Villa-Borghese, do not win the imagination like the vast, uncultured Campagna. A fine English park, with smooth roads intersecting natural forests, is more truly beautiful than a parterre surrounded with fantastic patterns of box or studded with bowers and temples, like the back scene of a play. The famous villa of the eccentric nobleman near Palermo, assures the traveller to what an extent a love of the grotesque may be carried in converting a residence of fine natural capabilities into an architectural and horticultural museum. Indeed, all experiments in this field of human ingenuity, simply prove that the judicious adaptation of natural advantages to beautiful and useful results, is all that can be wisely attempted. A clearing here, a path there, filling up a hollow, levelling a hill, letting in sunshine and shutting out the view of deformity—in a word, modifying the primitive aspect and not substituting art for nature, is the sign of a healthful taste. Such is the Anglo-Saxon tendency as manifest in the noble appreciation of forest

trees by Evelyn, and in the absence of the finical in most English and American rural homesteads. A disposition to ornament nature is altogether French; and its appearance on the other side of the Channel, has always been coincident with periods of conventional taste in society and letters. The formal elegance of a French garden or villa differs from the picturesque exuberance of an American woodland or an English meadow, just as Shakspeare differs from Racine. The one lays open nature for our cordial recognition; the other trims her after a classic or fanciful pattern; the one abounds in suggestions, the other in technicalities.

Shenstone represented this species of taste both in his grounds and his poems. The feet of his stanzas are ingeniously varied, and so were the walks through his domain. The flights of his muse were limited to the horizon of a small experience, and the prospects obtainable on his estate were equally bounded. Within the narrow compass of his sympathies, he ingeniously contrived to make as varied and melodious a little world as possible; and within the boundaries of Leasowes, he was not less inventive —here setting up a fantastic temple, and there a dark grove; now turning a rivulet into a cascade, and now surprising his guest with a root-woven seat in an arbour beside a crystal pool, or in view of a pretty vista. He wrote elegies on his friends, and erected funeral urns in their honour among his trees. He tried to win admiration by the sweet monotony

of his verses and the graceful windings of his paths; and was not less fastidious in the turn of a stanza, than in the pruning of an ilex.

He prided himself upon being anti-utilitarian. When a child, he always expected his mother to bring him a new book from market, and she, when neglecting to do so, used to give him a piece of wood covered to resemble a volume, with which he went contentedly to bed—thus early deriving from an indolent imagination the satisfaction which active realities only yield to others. He is said to have been indignant when asked if there were fishes in his miniature lakes. This extreme devotion to eye-pleasure led him even to neglect personal comfort, and he retired from his shrines and bowers to a mean and broken-roofed cottage. It is highly probable that the exposure he there suffered induced the fever of which he died. The expensive indulgence of this peculiar ambition soon brought him into pecuniary troubles; and bailiffs intruded where only guests of taste were desired.

There was something analogous in the dispositions of Thomson and Shenstone. The latter possessed an amiable temper combined with the tendency to extremes which appears to be inseparable from the poetic idiosyncrasy, even when crudely developed. "I never," said he, "will be a revengeful enemy; but I cannot, it is not in my nature, to be half a friend." He could have married, it is said, the lady to whom are addressed the best of his amatory

effusions; but something of the same mystery involves his celibacy, as is the case with the bard of the Seasons.

"Agriculture," says Keats, in one of his letters recently published, "is the tamer of men,—the steam from the earth is like drinking their mother's milk—it enervates their natures. This appears a great cause of the imbecility of the Chinese; and if this sort of atmosphere is a mitigation to the energies of a strong man, how much more must it injure a weak one, unoccupied, unexercised?" It seems as if rural pleasures should be occasional to be salutary. If Shenstone's life had been exposed to the intellectual and moral incitements of a metropolitan career, he would have retired to Leasowes with enlarged ideas and wider sympathies, and perhaps have risen from the details of a virtuoso to the general effects achieved by the thinker.

Some of his essays are pleasing, but devoted to quiet moralising or some insignificant theme. His letters scarcely touch upon anything but his writings and his place. Around these his thoughts and sympathies constantly revolved with an egotism which gives one a melancholy impression of the narrow resources and unmanly tone to which fanciful solitude may reduce an educated mind. He continued his name ten years at Oxford for the mere pleasure of learning, took no degree, and put on the civilian's gown without intending to engage in a profession. He then gave a brief period to acquainting himself

with life by visits to the principal watering-places. Thus provided with a modicum of learning and experience, he returned to his birthplace, and simultaneously practised verse-writing and landscape gardening; but the want of enlarged curiosity, exalted aims, and broad views, caused his tenderness and benevolence to evaporate in sentimental hospitality, and his invention to expend itself on inadequate materials.

"I have," says one of his letters, "an alcove, six elegies, a seat, two epitaphs, (one upon myself,) four songs, and a serpentine river, to show you when you come." This passage gives us an insight, at once, into the chief occupations of Shenstone. His "Essay on Men and Manners" contains many sensible observations agreeably expressed; but, like his poetry, seldom rising above a tranquil gracefulness of diction or pleasantry of thought. He belongs, however, to the correct and refined school of essayists, of which Addison is the main exemplar. We quote a few sentences, at random, as specimens of the manner and ideas of a genuine *dilettante:*

"When fame is the principal object of our devotion, it should be considered whether our character is like to gain in point of wit, what it will probably lose in point of modesty; otherwise we shall be censured of vanity more than famed for genius; and depress our character while we strive to raise it."

"The impromptu appears to me to have the nature of that kind of salad, which certain eminent adepts

in chemistry have contrived to raise while a joint of mutton is roasting. We do not allow ourselves to blame its unusual flatness and insipidity, but extol the little flavour it has, considering the time of its vegetation."

"There would not be any absolute necessity for reserve, if the world were honest; yet, even then it would prove expedient. For in order to attain any degree of deference, it seems necessary that people should imagine you have more accomplishments than you discover. It is on this depends one of the excellencies of the judicious Virgil. He leaves you something ever to imagine: and such is the constitution of the human mind, that we think so highly of nothing, as that whereof we do not see the bounds."

"The delicacy of his taste increased his sensibility, and his sensibility made him more a slave. The mind of man, like the finer parts of matter, the more delicate it is, naturally admits the more deep and the more visible impressions."

"Whence is it, my friend, that I feel it impossible to envy you, although, hereafter, your qualifications may make whole millions do so? for, believe me when I affirm, that I deem it much more superfluous to wish you honours to gratify your ambition, than to wish you ambition enough to make your honours satisfactory."

"All trees have a character analogous to all men: oaks are in all respects the perfect image of the manly character. In former times I should have

said, and in present times I think I am authorized to say, the British one. As a brave man is not suddenly either elated by prosperity or depressed by adversity, so the oak displays not its verdure on the sun's first approach, nor drops it on his first departure. Add to this its majestic appearance, the rough grandeur of its bark and the wide protection of its branches."

"Indolence is a kind of centripetal force."

"I hate maritime expressions, similes, and allusions; my dislike, I suppose, proceeds from the unnaturalness of shipping, and the great share which art ever claims in that practice."

"I am thankful that my name is obnoxious to no pun."

"It is a miserable thing to love where one hates; and yet it is not inconsistent."

"I cannot avoid comparing the ease and freedom I enjoy to the ease of an old shoe; where a certain degree of shabbiness is joined with the convenience."

"Two words, 'no more,' have a singular pathos; reminding us at once of past pleasure and the future exclusion of it."

"The superior politeness of the French is in nothing more discernible than in the phrases used by them and us to express an affair being in agitation. The former says 'sur la tapis;' the latter 'upon the anvil.' Does it not show also the sincerity and serious face with which we enter upon business, and the negligent and jaunty air with which they perform even the most important?"

"There are many persons acquire to themselves a character of insincerity, from what is in truth mere inconstancy. And there are persons of warm but changeable passions, perhaps the sincerest of any in the very instant they make profession, but the very least to be depended on through the short duration of all extremes."

"Extreme volatile and sprightly tempers seem inconsistent with any great enjoyment. There is too much time wasted in mere transition from one object to another; no room for those deep impressions which are made alone by the duration of an idea; and are quite requisite to any strong sensation, either of pleasure or of pain. The bee to collect honey, or the spider to gather poison, must abide some time upon the weed or flower. They whose fluids are mere sal volatile, seem rather cheerful than happy men. The temper above described, is oftener the lot of wits, than of persons of great abilities."

Compare these extracts with the colloquial wit of Sydney Smith's articles, the heavy artillery of Carlyle, or the rapier-like dexterity of Macaulay. Habituated to the vigorous spirit and rich thought of later essayists and poets, we can say of such writings as these, as Selkirk said of the beasts in his lonely isle,

"Their tameness is shocking to me."

One of the most felicitous instances of Shenstone's prose is a brief sketch entitled "A Character," and said to be a portrait of himself. It was written with

a pencil, on the wall of his room at Oxford, in 1735. Perhaps we cannot better illustrate our view of this amiable, tasteful and egotistic devotee of rural and rhythmical enjoyment, than by quoting it:

"He was a youth so amply furnished with every excellence of mind, that he seemed alike capable of acquiring or disregarding the goods of fortune. He had indeed all the learning and erudition that can be derived from universities without the pedantry and ill manners which are too often their attendants. What few or none acquire by the most intense assiduity, he possessed by nature; I mean that elegance of taste, which disposed him to admire beauty under its great variety of appearances. It passed not unobserved by him either in the cut of a sleeve, or the integrity of a moral action. The proportion of a statue, the convenience of an edifice, the movement in a dance, and the complexion of a cheek or flower, afforded him sensations of beauty; that beauty which inferior geniuses are taught coldly to distinguish, or to discern rather than feel. He could trace the excellencies both of the courtier and the student; who are mutually ridiculous in the eyes of each other. He had nothing in his character which could obscure so great accomplishments, beside the want, the total want, of a desire to exhibit them. Through this it came to pass, that what would have raised another to the heights of reputation, was oftentimes in him passed over unregarded. For, in respect to ordinary observers, it is requisite to lay some stress yourself,

on what you intend should be remarked by others; and this never was his way. His knowledge of books had in some degree diminished his knowledge of the world; or rather the external forms and manners of it. His ordinary conversation was, perhaps, laden rather too frequently with sentiment, the usual fault of rigid students; and this he would in some degree have regulated better, did not the universality of his genius, together with the method of his education, so largely contribute to this amiable defect. This kind of awkwardness, (since his modesty will allow it no better name,) may be compared to the stiffness of a fine piece of brocade, whose turgescency indeed constitutes and is inseparable from its value.

"He gave delight by a happy boldness in the extirpation of common prejudices; which he could as readily penetrate, as he could humorously ridicule. And he had such entire possession of the hearts as well as the understandings of his friends, that he could soon make the most surprising paradoxes believed and well accepted. His image, like that of a sovereign, could give an additional value to the most precious one; and we no sooner believed our eyes that it was he who spake it, than we as readily believed whatever he had to say. In this he differed from W——r, that he had the talent of rendering the greatest virtues unenvied: whereas the latter shone more remarkably in making his very faults agreeable; I mean in regard to those few he had to exercise his skill."

When the creative power is deficient, minds of ideal tendency seek gratification by means of taste. What they cannot realize through inward effort, they attempt to image in outward forms. The sense of beauty and aspiration, uncombined with moral vigour or great intellectual gifts, is thus developed externally and, as it were, through a kind of compromise between ability and desire. This appears to be the philosophy of dilettantiism. The active imagination repudiates outward embellishment; the comprehensive mind disdains graceful artifice, and the large and earnest heart cannot pause to dally with inane sentimentalities. It is on this account that when taste is a prevailing trait, it implies the absence of great qualities, exactly as the epithet amiable, when exclusive, suggests the idea of a common-place character. Both are secondary qualities, desirable as adjuncts to higher capacities, as modifications of richer gifts, rather than as essential. They are only negative excellencies.

In the history of literature we find that extreme taste is the characteristic of decline. It was grossly violated by the old English dramatists, and morbidly esteemed by the writers of the Restoration. It is related chiefly to details and hence, to a certain extent, is unfavourable to broad, deep, and energetic developments. The verbal controversies of the Italian academies aptly indicated the degeneracy of the national life compared with the robust yet unrefined age of the "grim Tuscan;" and it is in times when

society is uninspired by an exalted sentiment and the tone of life is material, that men of the virtuoso class prevail. In more serious and enthusiastic eras, they seem out of place. Leisure and freedom from lofty ambition, are necessary to their enjoyment. They live in a world of their own, but its sphere is insignificant. By surrounding themselves with quaint, beautiful, and curious memorials, they nurture the feelings which men of deeper natures can only actualize by deeds; and seek to reflect instead of embodying their finest instincts.

To the noblest order of minds, however, the emblems of beauty and truth aggravate instead of soothing. The most skilful combinations of music awaken longings for the unattained; every tint of perfection given by art or nature, stirs the wings of the soul by kindling desires for the unity of being, the harmony of spirit, of which they are visible types. Yet the amateur has his place in the social economy. The mass of people need to be refined, to acquire more delicate standards of judgment and to educate the perceptions. To this result the influence of these ministers of taste effectually contributes. Thus the airy, epistolary gossip of Walpole and his domestic museum at Strawberry Hill,—the artistic comments and rare trophies of Beckford, and the literary breakfasts and pleasing mementoes of Rogers, are associated with this agreeable kind of social utility.

The Moralist.

CHANNING.*

HALF a century ago, there might have been seen threading the streets of Richmond, a diminutive figure, with a pale, attenuated face, eyes of spiritual brightness, an expansive and calm brow, and movements of nervous alacrity. An abstraction of manner and intentness of expression denoted the scholar, while the scrupulously neat, yet worn attire, as clearly evidenced restricted means and habits of self-denial. The youth was one of those children of New England braced by her discipline, and early sent forth to earn a position in the world, by force of character and activity of intellect. He was baptized into the fraternity of Nature by the grandeur and beauty of the sea as it breaks along the craggy shore of Rhode Island; the domestic influences of a Puritan household had initiated him into the moral convictions; and the teachings of Harvard yielded him the requisite attainments to discharge the office of private tutor in a wealthy Virginian family. Then

* Memoir of William Ellery Channing, with extracts from his correspondence and manuscripts. In three volumes. Boston: William Crosby and H. P. Nichols. London: John Chapman. 1848.

and there, far from the companions of his studies and the home of his childhood, through secret conflicts, devoted application to books, and meditation, amid privations, comparative isolation, and premature responsibility, he resolved to consecrate himself to the Christian ministry. Illness had subdued his elasticity, care shadowed his dreams, and retirement solemnized his desires. Thence he went to Boston, and for more than forty years pursued the consistent tenor of his way as an eloquent divine and powerful writer, achieving a wide renown, bequeathing a venerated memory, and a series of discourses, reviews and essays, which, with remarkable perspicuity and earnestness, vindicate the cause of freedom, the original endowments and eternal destiny of human nature, the sanctions of religion and "the ways of God to man." Sectarian controversy, the duties of the pastoral office, journeys abroad and at home, intercourse with superior minds and the seclusion made necessary by disease,—the quiet of home, the refining influence of literary taste and the vocations of citizen, father and philanthropist, occupied those intervening years. He died, one beautiful October evening, at Bennington, Vermont, while on a summer excursion, and was buried at Mount Auburn. A monument commemorates the gratitude of his parishioners and the exalted estimation he had acquired in the world. A biography prepared by his nephew, recounts the few incidents of his career, and gracefully unfolds the process of his growth and mental history.

It is seldom that ethical writings interest the multitude. The abstract nature of the topics they discuss, and the formal style in which they are usually embodied, are equally destitute of that popular charm that wins the common heart. A remarkable exception is presented in the literary remains of Channing. The simple yet comprehensive ideas upon which he dwells, the tranquil gravity of his utterance, and the winning clearness of his style, render many of his productions universally attractive as examples of quiet and persuasive eloquence. And this result is entirely independent of any sympathy with his theological opinions, or experience of his pulpit oratory. Indeed, the genuine interest of Dr. Channing's writings is ethical. As the champion of a sect, his labours have but a temporary value; as the exponent of a doctrinal system, he will not long be remembered with gratitude, because the world is daily better appreciating the religious sentiment as of infinitely more value than any dogma; but as a moral essayist, some of the more finished writings of Channing will have a permanent hold upon reflective and tasteful minds. His nephew has compiled his biography with singular judgment. He has followed the method of Lockhart in the Life of Scott. As far as possible, the narrative is woven from letters and diaries,—the subject speaks for himself, and only such intermediate observations of the editor are given as are necessary to form a connected whole. Uneventful as these memoirs are, they are interesting as reve-

lations of the process of culture, the means and purposes of one whose words have winged their way, bearing emphatic messages, over both hemispheres, —who, for many years, successfully advocated important truths; and whose memory is one of the most honoured of New England's gifted divines.

To Dr. Channing's style is, in a great degree, ascribable the popularity of his writings; and we are struck with its remarkable identity from the earliest to the latest period of his career. A petition to Congress, penned while a student at the University, which appears in these volumes, has all its prominent characteristics—its brief sentences, occasionally lengthened where the idea requires it—its emphasis, its simplicity, directness, and transparent diction. This is a curious evidence of the purely meditative existence he must have passed; for it is by attrition with other minds and subjection to varied influences, that the style of writing as well as the tone of manners undergoes those striking modifications which we perceive in men less intent upon a few thoughts. His character is, therefore, justly described as more indebted to "the influences of solitary thought than of companionship." Such is the process by which all truth becomes clearly impressed and richly developed to consciousness; on the same principle that, according to Mary Wollstonecraft, reflection is necessary to the realization even of a great passion. "I derive my sentiments from the nature of man," says one of Channing's letters. Perhaps it would

have been more strictly true if he had said one man; for an inference we long ago derived from his writings, we find amply confirmed in these memoirs —that he was a very inadequate observer. Some of his attempts to portray character are as complete fancy sketches as we ever perused. They show an utter blindness to the real traits even of familiar persons. Beautiful in themselves, it is usually from the graceful drapery of his imagination that the charm is derived. Indeed, Dr. Channing hardly came near enough to see the features in their literal significance. He drew almost exclusively from within. His subjects were what the lay-figure is to the artist—frames for his thoughts to deck with effective costume. When he reasoned of a truth or an idea, he was more at home; for in the abstract he was at liberty to expatiate, without keeping in view the actual relations of things—the stern facts and bare realities of life and character. Indeed, nothing can be more delightful to a refined and thoughtful mind, than to follow Channing in his exposition of a striking idea or truth—so clearly and dispassionately stated, then gradually unfolded to its ultimate significance, with, here and there, a striking illustration; and then wound up, like a fine strain of music, which seems to raise us more and more into light and tranquillity on invisible pinions!

Physical causes had no inconsiderable effect in modifying the action and shaping the career of Dr. Channing. His early letters exhibit a phase of

character, which almost totally disappears as he advanced in life. A romantic hue, a spirit of good-fellowship, natural and beautiful in youth, and a sympathy with national and political movements, indicate that his original tendencies would have led to statesmanship, literature, or a still more active vocation. The solitude in which he lived at the South, as a tutor in a private family, his early responsibility consequent on the death of his father, his narrow pecuniary resources and an illness which forever shattered his originally vigorous constitution, —all combined to thrust him, as it were, back upon himself; to bring him in contact with stern and oppressive realities at an early age, and render peculiarly vivid the consciousness of wants, capacities, and infirmities which only slowly and, as it were, incidentally, are revealed to less sensitive and thoughtful minds. Hence religion, both from his instinct and his circumstances, became early a necessity; and truth the only sustaining aliment of his lonely and aspiring heart. We are not surprised that a man so constituted should find his experience opposed to the fallacious notion that youth is necessarily the happiest season of life. Lord Bacon says, that natures liable to great perturbations, only attain the self-command and aptitude requisite for action, at maturity. To such, existence is too oppressive, at first, to be pleasurable. There must intervene an epoch of struggle and conflict. The sensibilities cloud perception; doubt obscures truth; emotion

prohibits calmness. Through repeated experiments, long reflection, vague excitement, and alternations of fear and hope, the spirit gradually wins its advent into clearness and trust. Harmony is induced after repeated discords. A genuine relation to life and nature is, by degrees only, made apparent, and confidently seized upon. Chaos must come again, as it came to the baffled warrior, ere peace succeeds disappointment, and faith perplexity. In these memoirs, this transition is distinctly marked, and was gratefully realized.

To chasten and subdue feeling was, in his view, no small part of a wise morality. Among the chief attractions of a future state to him, was the reconciliation which he believed would there occur between the reason and the heart. It was this attempt to suppress emotion which gave to his elocution its persuasive charm. The depth of the under-current was revealed by a prolonged intonation, almost tremulous yet singularly firm—suggesting a power restrained, a sensibility overawed by reverence—than which no phase of oratory is more truly affecting. And yet the man who could so impress an audience, seldom called out, in personal intercourse, any of the latent sentiment of others. He inspired respect more than he won confidence. His thoughts interested his friends more than himself. His name was an exponent of certain principles associated with human progress and moral truth, rather than an endearing household spell. In conversation he ap-

peared mainly intent upon gleaning from his auditors new facts to aid his own speculations. If they had seen a new country, undergone a peculiar experience, or reflected deeply on general truth, he sought, by rigid inquiry, to elicit the result. Thus as a moralist, he pursued the same course as Goethe in his literary vocation—seeking to make his fellow-creatures objective, recoiling from assimilation, and repelling all sympathetic approach, in order to render them subservient to a professional end. It is hardly extravagant to say that men of this stamp,—that is, with great self-esteem and at the same time metaphysical, artistic, or philanthropic tastes, regard human nature very much as geologists regard the earth—as a wonderful cabinet on a grand scale, whence to draw gems of truth, or specimens of character, for the advantage of science.

Notwithstanding the apparent enthusiasm in regard to military prowess, it is evident that moral courage is better understood as civilization advances. The conviction has dawned even upon the common mind, that tranquilly and with firmness, to withstand public opinion, in a righteous cause, and be loyal to personal convictions, demands a manliness of character as rare as it is noble. No small part of the energy which lends impressiveness to Dr. Channing's writings, arises from the exercise of this valorous disposition. To those who witnessed the scene, for instance, when his election sermon was delivered in Boston, there remains a deep sense of the power of truthful oratory.

In this discourse, he elaborately defined his idea of freedom. Every sentence commencing, "I call that mind free," told upon the audience. As he described the narrowing effect of bigotry, some of the prominent representatives of a tyrannical priestcraft, actually writhed in their seats; and those who sympathized in the largeness and elevation of his doctrine, exhibited in their enkindled faces, the best response to his earnest plea for the spontaneous and untrammelled action of individual thought.

We demur somewhat to one of Dr. Channing's favourite opinions—the equality of human nature. In his zeal for the dignity of man, he overlooks not a few of the indisputable facts of nature; and indeed often manifests an unphilosophical dislike to recognise what is opposed to his own views, however true. Thus, in a letter to Combe, acknowledging a copy of his work on Man, he says—"The phrenological part I fear did me little good. I have a strong aversion to theories which subject the mind to the body." Such is by no means the case with phrenology justly interpreted;—it being rather the science of connexion between material and spiritual attributes—indicating their mutual relation; but, were it otherwise, the question for a great thinker to decide, is as to its truth; he must reverently explore, not presuppose, the laws of nature. In regard to human equality, more impartial observation would have led Dr. Channing to realize permanent natural distinctions in his fellow-creatures. There is, unquestionably, a nobility

based upon this diversity—an aristocracy which no institutions can repudiate—it being a great natural fact. That the capacity of progress exists almost universally, we are not disposed to contradict; but history and experience are continually demonstrating the superiority of innate over acquired influences. Character has been most aptly defined as an instinct. Many of Dr. Channing's views were derived purely from his own individual sense of a truth; very few of them from a wide and inductive observation. He was a man of the closet, a looker-on in the world,—thoughtful, conscientious and deeply interested in many of the grand problems to be solved,—yet too far removed from the scene to estimate all its agencies, or perceive its entire consequences. Thus, in his essay on Napoleon, he weighs him in the balance of disinterested virtue, and finds the modern conqueror infinitely wanting; but of the relation in which his achievements stand to the past and future, in a grand providential scheme of social regeneration, he seems never to have dreamed.

The influence exerted and the reputation acquired by Dr. Channing, is a striking instance of the triumph of consistency. The absence of versatility in his nature is remarkable. We scarcely know a parallel case in regard to any writer so generally recognised as eloquent. The traces of personal experience, observation of nature, or of intimacy with books, are comparatively rare. Everywhere we discern the evidences of a life apart from human interests as

they usually affect the individual. He reasons like one who has no personal stake in the issue of the question. A tone of superiority, a conscious exemption from the ruling passion of the hour, make him often appear like a judicious and benevolent arbitrator between humanity and the world, rather than a participant in the struggles, griefs, and pleasures of life. This partly arises from the singleness of purpose and unity of thought to which we have alluded. He harps always on one string. His mind revolves around a few great truths. He is like one who looks upon a wide landscape through the single loophole of an isolated and majestic tower. The music of his soul is often grand, but it is, after all, a monotone. His favourite theme was the essential dignity of human nature, its capacity of progress and immortal destiny. Upon these convictions he founded his moral system; and his various essays and addresses are only varied illustrations of their claims. The process of his mental development seems to have been little more than frequent and continuous reflection upon these ideas; and the power over other minds which he thus attained, is a proof of the superior value of concentration over the diffusive culture of the age. Dr. Channing appears to have shrunk from great familiarity with other minds even through their writings. We perceive no evidence of that cordial sympathy with authors, which breaks out so genially in the correspondence of other gifted men. His criticism on Milton is rather an intellectual re-

cognition of his genius than an affectionate tribute. In fact, in his studies as in his life, the predominant aim seems to have been self-possession. As he was accustomed to envelope his delicate frame with the utmost care, to guard against the bleak atmosphere, so he strove to throw a mantle of reserve around his spirit;—shunning the gregarious, intimate, and familiar, and seeking to draw from others aliment to his own mind, rather than buffet with them the waves of controversy, or mingle with them the glow of emotion or the stream of thought.

This unsocial disposition is likewise, in no small degree, referable to the reaction of an impressible organization. His biographer judiciously defends it by declaring that Dr. Channing was "keenly sensitive to the morbid feelings by which untuned spirits communicate their discord even to one who has attained serenity." It is said of Bonaparte that he could, by an effort of will, discharge his face of all expression; and there are persons who, in a similar manner, can ward off the ungenial, while in contact with it, by inducing an abstracted or antagonistic mood. Channing seems to have been so alive to physical and moral influences, that his comfort was only secured by an icy barrier which chilled intruders. It is singular, however, to observe, that while he felt it to be his sacred, individual right thus to keep others shivering in the vestibule of his soul's temple, towards the race in general, the community at large, the broad interests of society, he appears to

have been always conscious of a very near and responsible affinity. He writes of the elevation of the labouring classes, the destinies of Europe and the political aspects of his own country, as if they were somewhat assigned to his keeping. He seems always to feel, in regard to "human nature," as Hazlitt declares Wordsworth does towards the outward universe, a personal interest. Sometimes it would almost appear as if he were in a manner accountable, as an individual, for the advancement of the race; as if he were a prophet or a lawgiver, commissioned like those who ruled and guided the chosen people of God. He often speaks "as one having authority." This tone, though to the practical observer it is sometimes amusing, was doubtless instinctive. Dr. Channing consciously felt that the legitimate scope for his thought, and inspiration for his feelings, lay in progressive views of society and widely diffused sympathy for man.

The remark of one of the schoolfellows of Channing, when the latter was cited as an example—"it is easier for him to be good"—at once recognises a peculiar moral idiosyncrasy. We need but to glance over the records of biography to perceive that there is a distinct class of men who represent the saintly, as others do the heroic and poetical character. The retirement in which such natures ripen, was sought of old in the hermitage and convent; and now, as in the instance before us, in a kind of self-imposed monachism. It is, however, a serious question whether,

after all, this is a healthful species of moral development. Let any human being of strong will, live upon a fixed system of meditative retirement, and his passions will grow calm, his interest in outward life diminish, and, with the requisite temperament, he easily becomes rapt in spiritual ecstasies. When a man is endowed with remarkable conscientiousness and veneration, as well as gifts of mind, he seems ordained to promulgate truth and quicken in others the sentiments so active in himself. Such was the case with Dr. Channing. Yet to us his memory is hallowed, because he was so "clear in his great office," rather than from an unreserved admiration of his personal example. As a moral rhetorician, his labours have reflected honour on his name and country; as a man—there were peculiarities arising from education, physical constitution, and tendencies of nature, which rendered him a very incomplete representative of humanity. No one more eloquently discoursed of philanthropy; but his interest in man, in the abstract, was no test of his ready sympathy with the individual. Indeed, we have observed one trait in modern philanthropists which has sometimes reconciled us to the culture of humbler virtues. They are, generally speaking, the last men to whom are confided personal griefs, or whose exclusive amity is sought. They generalize with the heart as well as the mind; burn with indignation at the wrongs inflicted on the natives of Africa, while often profoundly indifferent to the true welfare of one of their

own household. How often some desolate human being, touched by their written appeals in behalf of a distant class of sufferers, is inspired with confidence to make them the recipients of secret troubles—to seek from them counsel and encouragement in loneliness and doubt. A benevolent father of the Catholic church, by the mere claim of his vocation—a warm-hearted sailor by the very candid generosity of his soul, or one of Nature's sisters of charity—encountered, as they are, in all the circles of life—were a surer ark of refuge. The views of the professed lover of his race are too expansive. His benevolence is purely speculative. His sympathy with man, is like that which the mere botanist has for a flower, or the surgeon for a human form. It is rather professional than natural; and he who has sought a conference with such, in order to relieve his overcharged heart, finds his utterance choked, his tears frozen, and every hope of recognition die within him! In these remarks, we design no indiscriminate application to the revered subject of the memoir before us. He accomplished good enough in his own way—perhaps the only one in which his efficiency was certain; but we desire to repudiate the common notion, that usefulness—in its highest sense—is confined to those broad fields of philanthropic enterprise, which an influential class among us seems to regard as the only legitimate arena of benevolence. We remember, as if it were but yesterday, at the close of a winter's day, soon after Dr. Channing's return from Europe, when his

slender form all at once appeared before a group of mourners—one of the families of his parish, who were bereaved, during his absence, of their dearest earthly friend. As he stood among them in the twilight, and the flickering blaze revealed his high and placid brow,—the eyes of one of those motherless children—(in whose mind his image was associated with the sweetest counsels of maternal tenderness, and upon whom his priestly hand had been laid in baptism)—instinctively sought his face with a penetrating glance,—a silent appeal for some word of solace in that dark hour. At length he spoke—but it was to exclaim, "What a mysterious Providence!" The scene had awakened a speculative reverie, and not one tear of commiseration. His mind was busy in the attempt to reconcile to itself a sad visitation; but his heart swelled not at the sight of the young band left alone to the perils of the world. And when he rose to depart, and looked back upon them, it was only to remark, "I am going to my solitary home." His own family had not yet returned from their country residence. In a few days at least, their presence would brighten his fireside, while those he left, were destined for years to a home made solitary by death! This incident illustrates the truth we design to suggest—that the sympathetic and reflective character have distinct provinces of action, and that any one who, from the perusal of these interesting memoirs, should deem their subject a model to be practically adopted, with a view to at-

tain the same moral results, would commit an egregious error. The truth is, the essence of Dr. Channing's life appears in his writings. There he emitted the vital aura of his few days of health. There he embodied the energy of feeling which other and less distinguished men give to the offices of friendship and love. He found, at an early age, that he must decide between the free exercise of social habits and feelings, and a sphere of utility based essentially upon contemplation. Had he possessed a greater mobility of character, power of adaptation, and facility of intercourse; especially had the affections of his nature been as individual as his intellectual processes, he would instinctively have cultivated the social duties and sentiments, and recognised in them, no small part of the grace and benignity of life. But his ill-health, the stern influences of his early years, the habit so remarkable in New England, of regarding character at the two extremes of right and wrong; and suspecting all zest of life as intrinsically evil, led him to cherish will beyond sentiment, to feel, with singular force, the responsibility incident to the right of choice in action; and hence to lean towards stoicism and penance. It is true, that as years advanced, the overstrained chords were a little relaxed, and he began to realize how much innocent delight is attainable through a receptive, truthful, genial spirit. He observed to one of his most intimate companions, as this softer experience dawned upon his mellow faculties,—that perhaps he had made a grand mistake—

perhaps the most happy and satisfactory life was one passed in the free and earnest exercise of the affections and sympathies.

Egotism was a striking trait in Dr. Channing. He was jealous of the least encroachment upon his own individuality. The first person singular constantly appears on every page of his writings; and we learn from the letters now first published, that his views of mental philosophy corresponded with his egotistical instinct. There is a curious subject of speculation and one which we believe has not yet been satisfactorily discussed—the relation of egotism to genius and virtue. A peculiar self-confidence, in a certain sphere, uniformly characterizes great men in every department. Indeed, an ingenious writer* almost makes it appear, that decision of character is the essence of all superiority—and this is but the result of personal conviction—or faith in the results of one's own thoughts. Where this quality predominates—if united with any real moral or intellectual ability, it renders its possessor, in a measure, oracular. His opinions are rather announced as truths than suggested as possibilities. His calm trust in himself communicates itself to his writings and acts, and hence the authority they exert over the multitude. We deem this vivid sense of personality—this disposition to view all subjects in the light of conscious reflection, as the trait which gives nerve

* John Foster.

and clearness to Dr. Channing's diction, and impressiveness to his style. He had the serious, collected air of one who had enjoyed special revelations; who occupied a higher platform than his fellows, and like the mystics of the East,—by a singular discipline and seclusion, had attained clearer glimpses of the unseen and the eternal. Egotism, if it does not betray itself offensively, is a vast source of influence. We forgive even its disagreeable manifestations, when united with genius or character. As a man of action, Napoleon was the greatest egotist that ever lived; and how much his success was enhanced and secured by the unwavering confidence this quality inspires! The boorishness of Dr. Johnson was forgiven because of the sense which underlaid his dogmatism. Dr. Channing's egotism was that of a moralist. He enunciated his views of man's nature and duties in the same authoritative style that the bard of Rydal interprets the revelations of nature, or Davy expounds a scientific discovery.

There is a fresh-water spring that gushes up through the sea on the Genoese coast, and, by the force of its jet, reaches the surface untinctured with the brine around it. Dr. Channing's ideal of virtue was apparently to preserve an inward force whereby his nature could penetrate and rise above adjacent life without imbibing its qualities—intact, free and sustained. His loyalty to this principle undoubtedly is one cause of his clearness, force, and persuasive rhetoric. Perhaps it was the only course for such a

man to pursue; and its results sufficiently prove its efficiency. Yet it would be a great error to urge its universal adoption. As a moralist, Dr. Channing chiefly erred by deriving nearly all truth from his own consciousness. He was eminently fitted to attain harmony through meditation. His genius was essentially monastic. But the greater number of human beings can only improve through a sympathetic culture. They assimilate the means of growth and inward felicity through love rather than will. They advance in proportion as they forget themselves in "an idea dearer than self," and instead of purposing individual good as an ultimate end to be consciously sought, they instinctively yield themselves up to nature, truth, and affection, to work what results they may. It has been thus with great men. It was so with Shakspeare and Burns. It is so with the adventurous, the poetical, and the heroic character. To fall back upon consciousness, to isolate life, to seek a superhuman alliance with truth, would be to mar and enfeeble both their usefulness and virtue. It is surely possible to fraternize without losing identity, to accept the graceful, the wise and the kindly agencies of life, without compromising any private right. Yet, according to the school of which Dr. Channing is the most eminent exponent, there is something dangerous and fearful in the social order instituted by God. Emerson thinks we should "sit like gods on separate peaks." In the spirit of this philosophy there is a certain degree of truth. Poets and sages have emphatically indicated the office of

solitude, as holy, mysterious, and desirable; but when the exclusive principle is suffered to overlay elements equally important, we protest against it as false, irrational, and inhuman.

One problem, therefore, irresistibly suggests itself in the contemplation of such a life and its results—the comparative worth of individualism and sympathy. Dr. Channing embodied a principle that lies at the foundation of modern philosophy and constitutes the distinctive feature of German literature. He esteemed intuition far above observation; he looked chiefly within and seldom around for truth; in a word, he fortified his own moral nature and dwelt therein, scarcely ever yielding himself to the outward, the distant, or the familiar. This is the tone of his writings and the spirit of his character; and to this we cannot but refer much that was peculiar and enduring in his agency. In a general point of view and in regard to the majority of human beings, perhaps it is neither feasible nor desirable that individualism should be so completely realized. Yet it seems the characteristic which almost universally belongs to the functions of genius and conscience; and in this age of multitudinous experiment, and in this country of broad and varied external activity, no lesson can be brought home with more needful advantage. It is deeply interesting to trace its gradual and concentrated influence, its distinguished fruits and limitless associations as unfolded in these pages.

To produce an adequate impression either in lite-

rature or art, two conditions are indispensable—a command of the materials and an effective subject. Language is the medium of the rhetorician, ideas his vantage-ground. Over the latter Channing obtained a characteristic mastery. Without the subtle tact of the poet, he possessed a grasp of expression, whereby he effectually made words the vehicle of truth,—rapid, direct and significant. In opposition to the hopeless theories of life and destiny nourished by the gloomy theology which prevailed originally in his native region, he seized upon certain expansive and encouraging thoughts based on the latent powers of the soul; and these he strenuously developed as motives of action and pledges of growth. The existence of conscience, will, and moral sensibility in man, few have the perverseness to deny; and from these he deduced high conceptions of the ability and rights of our common nature. To aspiring, gentle and lofty souls such appeals came as divine auguries. Upon such, the influence of his discourses fell with a cheering import. They awoke a faith in the recuperative energy of the moral instincts. They sounded like the summons of a clarion amid the desolate gloom of remorseful meditation. They quickened into new life the repressed elasticity of the mind; and by imparting a consciousness of power, called into action hopes, aims, and sentiments, which, unenvoked, might have long slumbered in impotent despair. This was a high service. Let it be duly honoured. We believe it to be the only process by

which a class of men, among the noblest of their kind, can be effectually roused and comforted; and in view of the sphere of utility thus realized, it is scarcely grateful to criticise the example which these memoirs reveal. Yet, there is a vast difference between character and thought, opinion and life, habit and genius. For the truths to which Channing attached such inestimable value, we refer to his writings; for a portrait of the man, we are indebted to his biographer, and that suggests many inferences which serve to throw new light upon the actual relation between personality and faith. One great principle we everywhere see displayed is that the generation of an inward force is the great end of all that deserves the name of education. Not in scholarship, readiness, tact, or discipline—but in the capacity to think wisely, to feel truly, to act justly, lies the absolute greatness of man. It is in vain to evade or conceal this primal fact. In Channing's own words, "to get a disposable strength of intellect," is after all the one thing needful in all genuine mental culture. Doubtless this is to be attained in various ways, according to the tendencies and gifts of the individual; in his case it was by meditative rather than external intentness that the boon was sought and found. And to enforce this law, as the requisite of similarly constituted beings, seems to us the essential truth to be gleaned from these volumes. It is only partially recognised in our systems of education and individual theories. Lamb says a man may lose

himself in another's ideas as easily as in a neighbour's grounds. We may be so diverted from all singleness of purpose and individuality of life, as to defeat the very object sought abroad, even among the richest fields of experience. "To thine own self be true," was a maxim of the sagacious and prudent courtier; more nobly interpreted, it is also the doctrine of moral insight, and one which Channing has most admirably illustrated.

The Wit.

SWIFT.

THE obstacle which has interfered with a just appreciation of Swift, by British writers, has been political opinion. Hence the two extremes of laudation and censure manifested in Scott's partial biography and Jeffrey's caustic review. It is, indeed, to be regretted by all lovers of literature, in its broad and artistic relations, when a great writer becomes a violent partisan. The interest of his works is thus rendered temporary and their spirit narrowed. Instead of comprehensive views fitted to charm the thinker of a distant generation, they too often yield but clever instances of special pleading, and are intended for a day and not for all time. Although a great part of Swift's writings belong to this class, the fact that they have survived and are still read with zest, is the best proof of his originality. What strikes us, at once, in his literary career, is its remarkable efficiency. It is common to regard the man of letters and the man of action as wholly distinct; but in Swift we have an example of their identity. The results of his pen were actual, tangible, and impressive. He wrote seldom for display, occasionally for amusement, but, in general, to produce a decided

end, in which he seldom failed. His life is a complete refutation of the utilitarian sneer at the vanity of authorship. Here we have a man of no estate and obscure birth, by the mere force of his diction and the energy of his thought, exercising an influence upon those possessed of executive power to such a degree as to control and direct it. We see him espouse a cause in his study and are assured of its triumph; we hear his repartee at a political dinner silence a concerted opposition; we follow the paragraph which he has indited for a journal, as it circulates through a kingdom, and diverts into a new channel the whole tide of public opinion. Pamphlets were his ammunition. With these he carried on argumentative and satirical war, and waged battles for a party or a whim. A sarcasm, or an epigram often enabled him to attain his social objects; and he inflamed the popular heart with appeals distributed by the ballad-mongers. Thus his single will was continually achieving its ends, and his thought moulding opinion. Like the renowned man-at-arms of the middle ages, his services and allegiance were eagerly sought by those in power, and his pen was to him what the sword was to the brave and skilful of an earlier day—the instrument at once of fortune, vengeance, and glory.

Hence his success is to be estimated by the number of his immediate triumphs, rather than by the duration of his fame. He wrote always for a special purpose, and this accomplished, gave himself no farther

trouble. His mind was essentially practical, his aims invariably definite. Few English writers have laboured to such good purpose, if we deem the realization of individual desire—the impinging of one's way of thinking upon others, as the test of ability. Whether to gratify a caprice, to punish an enemy, to convert an antagonist, or to change the face of public affairs, Swift wrote with a tact, a force, and a clearness, that almost insured a satisfactory issue. He selected the best weapon and used it with rare judgment. He did not seem to consider writing as an ideal, but a practical art. It was his unfailing resource. If we would appreciate his efficiency as an author,—without reckoning the influence of his pen when in the service of the English ministry, at which time it is acknowledged that he long controlled the political views of the nation,—let us remember the fact, that one of his pamphlets caused the erection of fifty new churches in London; that the "Predictions of Isaac Bickerstaff," besides exciting the activity of the Inquisition of Portugal, gave the primary impulse to periodical literature and originated the British essayists; that the pretended confession of Elliston actually checked street-robbery for years; that he made the fortune of Barber the printer, afterwards Lord Mayor, and that the Drapier's Letters were the first and may yet be recorded as the most effectual blow ever struck for Ireland. With such fruits the pen-craft of Swift abounded. His life is a wonderful contrast to that of the meditative of the lettered race.

Conflict apparently was his delight. Authorship was a single-handed fight. He was a kind of intellectual gladiator, and only in the excitement of a war of opinion, or a skirmish of wit, appears to have been able to render himself oblivious of a morbid physique and corroding passions. He long enjoyed a wide mental dictatorship, such as Boswell's idol aspired to, but only attained in a particular circle. His enterprise of mind has been rarely equalled. He was a bold, opinionative adventurer; formidable in grave discussions and ingenious in trifling. No curious speculations, no aspiring visions, no exquisitely elaborated fancies adorn his page; but pungent sense, keen wit, adroit argument, and vigorous judgment often lead us to respect where we can neither admire nor love. Swift's power lay in his grasp of the actual. He had a clear, but not an exalted vision. He looked more frequently to the strata beneath than the stars above him; and was more anxious for a good foothold on the material present than a clear glimpse into the eternal future. He dealt mainly with the positive, the attainable—the facts and interests of life and man—and the motives and tendencies of the hour. He was a kind of inspired Cobbett, and wrote very much on the principles upon which Stuart painted. Refinement, delicacy—all that we intend by the term ideal—seemed alien to his nature. He possessed eminently the genius of common sense. His insight was that of affairs. Of the able men of his day, he was best

armed and equipped for the useful in literature. He threw the light of genuine intelligence on many of the questions of the time, and addressed the universal mind in a way readily understood. Hence both his usefulness and popularity. To a like cause we attribute that indifference to his literary reputation which has been noticed as a peculiarity. He had not the imagination to cherish the highest view of the art he cultivated. Its value to him was comparatively material. The objects he sought rendered the means employed secondary. He exercised authorship as an attorney pleads—with learning, logic, ingenuity and eloquence, but when the case was gained, the plea was forgotten. The principles which endear literature, as such, are truth and taste, the former recognising the substance, the latter the form. Swift was so much occupied with the advocacy of particular ideas and the achievement of temporary projects, that he scarcely dreamed of embodying his talents in a production of well-considered elegance and lasting grace. Carelessness is stamped on all his works. Their harmony is incomplete. If he verges on sentiment, it is soon profaned by levity; the brightness of his intelligence is obscured by vulgarity; and the subtlety of his judgment blunted by the coarseness of his expressions.

To great mental activity Swift united a singular force of purpose. He was both acute and relentless, and hence admirably fitted to excel as a partisan writer. Much has been said of his inconsistency in

this vocation, but when all the circumstances are weighed, it does not appear so glaring. He was confessedly a moderate Whig, and carried the same temper to the other standard. Macaulay, in his recent history—after tracing the real origin of the two great English parties to the Long Parliament, justly declares that the country could spare neither, and that their mutual action gave birth to and confirmed the happily balanced principles of constitutional government. He also recognises a similar distinction in the very nature of society—with reference to art, literature, and manners, as well as in politics. Such is the opinion of all liberal and enlightened men. Doubtless Swift embarked in the career of a political essayist, in part, from motives of self-interest; but his early initiation into comprehensive speculations while secretary to Sir William Temple, his knowledge of the world, and his keen perception of merits and defects, both in character and in theories, justify the inference that he belonged to the clear-sighted and right-feeling class indicated by the fluent historian, who occupy the frontier ground, and, therefore, are not to be condemned as insincere for alternate skirmishes on both sides. Candour will not fail often to discern essential principles in the views he advocated, however contradictory; and Jeffrey's inference that in the Drapier's Letters, his object was "not to do good to Ireland, but to vex the English ministry," is quite gratuitous. In this, as in most cases, he doubtless acted from blended motives;

for throughout his life he seems to have taken a peculiar delight in exercising benevolence morosely, and giving way to malevolence urbanely,—enjoying the zest of retaliation and the consciousness of doing good at the same time. Thus we believe his sympathy with Lord Oxford was as real as his pleasure at the success of his new allies, and therefore it was not inconsistent to prefer to cheer the sad journey of the one to uniting in the triumph of the other. It is not unusual to find bitternesss and charity in the same heart. Generous people are not infrequently vindictive—especially through offended pride. Swift was brutal in his satirical persecution of Tighe, Bettesworth, and others who were so unfortunate as to cross his path; yet, on this account, we should not, in the least, question the genuine kindness which led him to write stories to increase the half-pay of a worthy old captain, give the copyright of a popular ballad to a deserving widow, yield so cordially his first benefice to a poor clergyman, loan money statedly to the indigent, and found, by will, a lunatic asylum in Dublin, which yet bears witness to his philanthropy. In fact, to nomenclate character as we do plants and minerals, is absurd, and especially in a case like Swift, who exhibited unusual contradictions. He who uttered a withering sarcasm with the cruelty of an inquisitor, used to pray with meek devotion; the misanthrope who read his coming fate in the withered top of a lofty elm, went through the elaborate joke of waiting on his own servants at supper;

and the greatest of libellers was made unhappy, for days, by a cold look from Temple. He was disgraced at college for frolics which he long afterwards declared, instead of originating in exuberant youthful spirits, were entered into purely from the recklessness of thwarted desires. In his dogmatism and morbid irritability Swift resembled Dr. Johnson; in his rough kindliness, Abernethy. His economy appears to have originated in a keen sense of early privation and a somewhat uncommon appreciation, for a man of letters, of pecuniary responsibility. His melancholy and fits of temper grew out of disease and baffled hopes. Patronage galled his proud and sensitive nature, and yet it was his life-long doom,—first from relatives, then from government. The prejudice excited in Queen Anne's mind by the Archbishop of York, on account of the alleged infidelity in the "Tale of a Tub," is supposed to be the reason of the "long delays" he endured, and the final inadequate appointment of Dean of St. Patrick —a title which, however undesirable in his own estimation, soon become famous enough to satisfy ordinary ambition. This "honourable exile," as he calls it, was attended by an unprecedented local consideration after Swift proved himself a successful champion of Ireland; and the oblation of her people, at his death, after three years of insanity had separated him from the associations of life, has never been surpassed for regretful sentiment and zealous honours.

Swift's most celebrated papers are of an allegorical kind, and though interspersed with judicious remarks and clever hits, to a reader whose taste has been formed on later models, cannot fail to be tedious. Thus "The Tale of a Tub" is an elaborate satire upon popery, ingenious and often correct, yet quite unintelligible without the notes, and spun out to a wearisome degree; the same may be said of the "Battle of the Books" and the "Essay on Polite Conversation." The Dialogues of the latter are an exaggerated take-off of the strained wit that prevailed in the author's day, and parts of them are quite as amusing as a good comedy. We have many specimens of this allegorical and indirect way of enforcing a truth, or illustrating a moral, to which Swift resorted, such as Telemachus, Rasselas, and Sartor Resartus, which unite invention with far more earnestness and beauty. Indeed the vulgarity of Swift is sometimes unendurable. He seems to delight in low metaphors and gross allusions. His coarseness is gratuitous and his smut deliberate. He repudiates Pope's axiom, that "want of decency is want of sense," for the two are constantly mingled in his writings. Irony and paradox he developes with a prolonged relish. A very characteristic instance of both is afforded in his defence of madness, founded on the idea that—"he that can with Epicurus, content his ideas with the films and images that fly upon his senses from the superficies of things; such a man, truly wise, creams off nature, leaving the sour and

the dregs for philosophy and reason to lap up. This is the sublime and refined point of felicity, called the possession of being well deceived; the serene, peaceful state of being a fool among knaves." The acuteness exhibited in this chapter is affecting when we remember that the mind that dallied so boldly with the most awful visitation to which humanity is subject, was destined to become its prey. The metaphors of Swift remind us occasionally of Crabbe. They are of the humblest kind; yet often significant, for instance, "Wisdom is a hen, whose cackling we must value and consider, because it is attended with an egg; but then, lastly, it is a nut, which, unless you choose with judgment, may cost you a tooth, and pay you with nothing but a worm."

Satire has its office in literature and in the affairs of the world, but it is one so liable to abuse and so infrequently in alliance with perfect justice, that its exercise is seldom desirable. Where appeals to the reason and feelings prove insufficient, ridicule is sometimes the only available means left. No one doubts that the keen edge of criticism has lopped away excrescences and caused the sap in the tree of knowledge to evolve in fruits and blossoms. Goldoni's comedies visibly reformed Venetian practices. Again and again, in France, the social tone has been modified by polished satirical attacks. In England, the first essayists gracefully laughed away many indigenous follies; and the brilliant reviewers of a later day have shamed into deserved obscurity the preten-

sions of lettered mediocrity. In poetry, in fashion, in art, and even in personal character, we see the most wonderful improvements brought about by a discriminating use of this weapon. It is a reformer that penetrates where gentler ministrants find no admittance; and even in social intercourse, its delicate and kindly introduction has a wholesome effect—restraining presumption, exciting the apathetic, and giving point and spirit to conversation. Let this be conceded to satire divorced from malignity; but in the hands of the selfish or arbitrary, there is no more dangerous facility or remorseful gift. Not for a moment can we hesitate in choosing between the gentleness which is power and the power whose only attribute is cruelty. Hazlitt has admirably defined wit as the "eloquence of indifference." There is a certain want of heart in those who possess it as a prevailing trait. It is not surprising that Swift endorsed the maxims of Rochefoucault. The process by which the satirist vanquishes even error, is an indurating one. He must often, as a preparatory step, hush the pleadings of humanity. He wounds it may be to cure, but how seldom is it done "more in sorrow than in anger;" and how constantly does it breed animosity! We cannot lose sight of the great fact that writing is a deliberate act. The cutting word spoken in an ebullition of temper and the fatal blow struck on the instant of provocation, are far more defensible than the carefully penned lampoon or the stab of the assassin's dagger. We envy not the mid-

night reveries of the man whose pen is habitually employed as an instrument of intellectual revenge; and the meanest threat we ever imagined, was that of an unprincipled man of genius, in his quarrel with an honest farmer,—that he would "write him down." The dark side of Swift's career, as a writer, is its malign aspect. We speak not of the keenness of his onsets in honest controversy, when he manfully battled for his party, for the Church of England, or for suffering Ireland; sarcasms may be heaped upon theories, acts of public assemblies and projects of government, without involving the peace of any human being; but the personal satire of Swift is often not only merciless, but wholly unjustifiable. His persecution of Steele, who had once been his friend, is an instance. The truth is, there are points of honour taken for granted by chivalric natures, in all conflicts,—and one is that it is unfair to attack an open enemy with a weapon he cannot sway, and of which his antagonist is master. Swift repeatedly made satirical war upon men utterly incapable of any retaliation except that of the duello, from which the Dean's sacred office protected him.

His hardihood, in this respect, is evinced by his cherished resentments. He detested Trinity College all his life, because it was the scene of his youthful punishment; he continued to hate those of his kindred who had displeased him as a boy; and he never forgave Queen Caroline for not sending the medals she had promised him while princess. He could use

facts, the knowledge of which he gained in friendship, to the injury of his adversary after a change of feeling occurred. It is no wonder that one of his victims attempted to cut off his ears. In the intensity of his scorn he reminds the American reader of John Randolph. Literature he seemed to regard as an arena rather than a resource. It was his vantage-ground, whereon he made himself amends for the churlishness of fortune. It was to him an armory, not a bower; he sought its thorns to head arrows of revenge, not its roses to weave garlands for the banquet; its asperities rather than its amenities were his delight. In a word, Swift carried the passions which men of action develope in deeds, into his intellectual life. Tasso used his pen to celebrate a holy crusade or the charms of his love, and met his enemies, like a brave gentleman, with his sword; Swift too often desecrated the sacred office of the one to the butchery of the other.

Even when thwarted by the indifference or incapacity of woman, his annoyance vented itself in satire. It is curious that while few intellectual men ever took more pains to develope the sex, no one more affected to despise them. He takes infinite pains to repel the idea of love as a weakness, extols the lasting happiness of genuine friendship, and describes his intercourse with the youngest of his victims as merely paternal.

> His conduct might have made him styled
> A father and the nymph his child,

Such innocent delight he took
To see the virgin mind—her book.

One would suppose, however, from the annexed passage, that he would have grown sooner weary of this charming study.

In a dull stream which moving slow,
You hardly see the current flow;
If a small breeze obstruct the course,
It whirls about for want of force,
And in its narrow circle gathers
Nothing but chaff, and straw, and feathers.
The current of a female mind
Stops thus and turns with every wind;
Thus whirling round together draws
Fools, fops and rakes for chaff and straws.
Hence we conclude no woman's parts
Are won by virtue, wit, and parts
Nor are the men of sense to blame
For breasts incapable of flame.

There is something very beautiful in the relation of intellectual men to gifted women—a process of mutual development—the history of which, in many instances, it is delightful to trace; but the order of nature seems to have been reversed in the case before us. The desire to be loved existed chiefly on the part of those to whom he seems to have given his society, while his expressed feelings towards them were objective and independent. It is true, in allusion to the death of Stella, he speaks of her as "that person for whose sake only life was worth preserving;" and yet he never recognised, while en-

joying the amplest opportunity, the sympathies he constantly evoked. It is true that Vanessa ingenuously avows how much her nature is indebted for its growth and expansion to his influence, but he never inspired her with that confidence which alone renders the affections a source of true happiness.

> Still listening to his tuneful tongue
> The truths which angels might have sung,
> Divine imprest their gentle sway,
> And sweetly stole my soul away,
> My guide, instructor, lover, friend,
> Dear names, in one idea blend.

Perhaps a latent conviction of the unenviable reputation of a satirist, induced him to disavow malevolence, and defend the kind of writing to which he was addicted. "There is very little satire," he says, "which has not something in it untouched before, but the materials of panegyric being very few in number, have long since been exhausted." Originality, indeed, appears to have been a cardinal point with Swift; and to this quality almost exclusively he owes the continuance of his fame. He boasts that he was never known to steal a hint. The party questions he discussed, are comparatively without interest; as an essayist, he has been superseded by more graceful and versatile pens; as a rhymester, the higher level of taste condemns him to neglect; but as the author of Gulliver's Travels his renown is firmly based. Though intended as a local satire, the novelty of the concep-

tion and the verisimilitude of the execution, mark this work as one of true genius, whose standard value is only diminished by the occasional blemishes of a low and perverted taste. It exhibits the same circumstantial felicity in description which Caleb Williams does in events. Besides this *capo d'opera* of satirical writing, Swift vindicated himself more explicitly elsewhere; facts, however, do not warrant the complacency of his statement.

> He spared a hump or crooked nose
> Whose owners set not up for beaux,
> True genuine dulness moved his pity
> Unless it offered to be witty.
> Those who their ignorance confessed
> He ne'er offended with a jest,
> But laughed to hear an idiot quote
> A verse from Horace learned by rote.

It is conceded that the most satisfactory part of Swift's life, at least in his own estimation, were his busy years in London, spent in the service of party leaders of this epoch, of which we have a full account in the "Journal to Stella"—a record which confirms our preconceived notion of his character. It shows his devotion to the actual by his brief chronicle of the events of each day, with few comments or fancies to enliven the summary; his egotism by the importance he attaches to the least thing that concerns himself; his want of refinement by the coarseness of the epithets; his arbitrary tendency by its tone, and his deficient ideality by the absence of beautiful sen-

timent or graceful expression. His relation to Stella is only to be inferred from the familiarity and confidence of its revelations; it implies intimacy rather than tenderness. To know how a man passes his time is, however, no slight assistance to the interpretation of his life and genius. According to this journal, Swift was in a constant whirl of political and social excitement, and a rainy or an ill day he, therefore, found quite "apathetic." He dined with ministers, envoys, lords and duchesses,—visited Congreve in his blindness, called for his letters at Steele's office, chatted with Rowe and Prior at one coffee-house, and joined Harley in anathematizing the opposition at another; supped often with Addison, wrote an occasional paper for the Tatler, and daily jotted down for Stella's enlightenment, the state of his health and the weather, the names of new acquaintances and the conduct of old, the dishes he had eaten, the geography of his lodgings, the nick-nacks he had purchased to bring to Ireland, and the stage of his progress in a political despatch, in the advocacy of a petition, or the composition of a lampoon. He expresses violent anger towards all whose treatment dissatisfies him, and frankly talks of going to bed "rolling resentments in his mind." This diary exhibits the greatest activity of mind and consciousness of ability, and an extraordinary mixture of satirical, inquiring, ambitious, and convivial temper, with so little of the enthusiasm of the poet, the tenderness of the lover, or the spirituality of the divine, that we can

seldom realize that its author ever had any legitimate claim to either title.

Dryden's prediction that Swift would never be a poet seems to us to have been verified; and this opinion we infer not only from his versified but his prose compositions. His facility in the use of language, his "knack of rhyming," and the various odes and other metrical pieces which are found in his collected works, do not invalidate our position. The term poet has now more than a technical meaning. It is used to designate a certain species of character and tone of mind, and is often applied to those who have not written verse, and, perhaps, never written at all. A deep sense of the beautiful, and intimate relations with the human, the natural and the divine, arising from earnestness of feeling and spirituality of perception, are qualities now regarded as essential to the name of poet. In these Swift was singularly deficient. All that gave point to, or yet redeem his verses, are their cleverness of diction and their wit. No poet could habitually write such prose. It is utterly destitute of glow; there are no kindling expressions; the flow of words never accidentally becomes rhythmical from the loftiness of the sentiment, as in Burke, or its pathetic sweetness, as in Dickens. And yet, of its kind, Swift's style is unsurpassed. For perspicuity, directness, and freedom from involution or bombast, it is a model. It is exactly such a style as is desirable for the man of affairs, whose object is to address the common sense of mankind,

and to be equally understood by the cultivated and the vulgar. Without ornament, and just raised above the colloquial by the arrangement of words, only the worth or the salient points of the thought, lend it the least attraction. To this very absence of elegance and fervour in style, may be ascribed Swift's popularity. Queen Anne's reign has been called the age of the wits. Prior circumstances rendered that period the reverse of an earnest one. Sentiment was at a discount and sense at a premium. Social follies prevailed; party feeling ran high. Fanaticism and debauchery had each been carried to extremes; and the reaction caused strength of mind and clearness of thought to be admired. Hence Swift, with his vigour of statement, his universally intelligible language, and, especially, his caustic irony and stinging repartee, was the very writer to affect a public, weary of lackadaisical versewrights and croaking bigots, and alike distrustful of enervating taste and morbid enthusiasm.

Unfortunately Swift was not content with intellectual empire. He sought and keenly enjoyed a sway over hearts; and to this desire, unnaturally aggravated by causes already suggested, we ascribe his conduct toward Stella and Vanessa. There is not a trace of genuine amatory feeling in his poems. Compare his love-verses with those of Petrarch, Barry Cornwall, Mrs. Norton, or any other sincere votary of the tender passion, and this fact will be apparent. Every circumstance related of his intercourse with

the unhappy women whose affections he won, his own allusions to them in verse and prose, and their actions and expressions with reference to him, indicate that the love of power and not the delights of mutual love actuated him. He sought to wind himself, as it were, into their souls, to become a moral necessity, to call out all the recognition of which they were capable, to be the motive and the arbiter of their inward life, and the consciousness of having attained this appears to have satisfied him; while they, more soulful and human, pined, in vain, for the endearments, the entire confidence, and the realized sympathies of love. It is said that Richter sought intimate association with interesting women for the express purpose of discovering materials for romantic art. Swift did the same apparently for the mere gratification of self-love. As far as he was capable of passion it was intellectual, spent itself in words, and a kind of philosophical dalliance with sentiment, only torturing to its objects. Doubtless he liked the companionship of both Stella and Vanessa, and from his own peculiar nature could but feebly understand the agonizing uncertainties and wearisome suspense to which his equivocal behaviour subjected them; but these considerations are quite insufficient to excuse the positive inhumanity of his course. That his view of love was rather metaphysical than natural—a thing more of the will than the heart, and inspired by reflection instead of sentiment, is manifest not only by his con-

duct but in his writings. Thus in his apostrophe to Love he says—

> In all I wish, how happy I should be,
> Thou grand Deluder, were it not for thee!
> So weak thou art that fools thy power despise,
> And yet so strong thou triumph'st o'er the wise!
> Thy nets are laid with such peculiar art,
> They catch the cautious, let the rash depart;
> Most nets are filled for want of thought and care,
> But *too much thinking* brings us to thy snare.

How, by his wit and wisdom, he built up a mental supremacy and thus attached to himself these fresh and devoted hearts, is evident in the case of Stella, by the fact that he was the preceptor of her childhood, and the exclusive counsellor of her mature years; while Vanessa says of him—

> When men began to call me fair,
> You interposed your timely care:
> You early taught me to despise
> The ogling of a coxcomb's eyes,
> Showed where my judgment was misplaced,
> Refined my fancy and my taste.

It will not do to gloss over the inevitable consequences of obligations like these, voluntarily conferred upon a susceptible and candid girl. He must have instinctively anticipated her confession.

> Your lessons found the weakest part,
> Aimed at the head and reached the heart.

It is true, in the celebrated verses descriptive of this unhappy love, he says, that at the discovery, he

> —— felt within him rise
> Shame, disappointment, grief, surprise.

Yet, with heartless egotism, he goes on, year after year, fostering a hopeless attachment, concealing from one his relation with the other, until forced into a nominal marriage with Stella, and the bitter truth flashed upon the wretched Vanessa, whom he leaves to wrestle alone with her misery, until death gives her a welcome release! The most exacting sentiment which ever inspired a man, could require no more complete self-dedication than these fair beings gave the object of their love. Stella existed only for him; and an humble neighbour of Vanessa describes her as passing all her time in walking in the garden, reading and writing, and never seeming happy except during the visits of Swift. Byron in one of his letters says, with an evident and characteristic appreciation of this waste of feeling: "Swift, when neither young, nor handsome, nor rich, nor even amiable, inspired the two most extraordinary passions upon record, Vanessa's and Stella's.

> Vanessa, aged scarce a score,
> Sighs for a gown of forty-four.

He requited them bitterly; for he seems to have broken the heart of the one and worn out that of the

other; and he had his reward, for he died a solitary idiot in the hands of servants.

The source both of Swift's errors and triumphs was a love of power. We are convinced that this is the key to the puzzle which, at first, seems to baffle inquiry in regard to his anomalous conduct. There is always a vindicatory principle at work in life and nature. Where any element is thwarted in one direction it will assert itself elsewhere; the root which meets a rock, gnarls itself upward in fibrous convolutions; the stream impeded in its onward flow, either gushes into a fountain or expands into a lake; the disappointed bard transforms himself into a ferocious critic, and the unsuccessful belle turns devotee. Now, the traits of humanity were incomplete in Swift. He possessed acuteness and vigour of intellect, strong will, remarkable wit and faculty of application, but he seems to have been destitute of passion. It was rarely, therefore, that a genial, homogeneous excitement warmed and fused his nature. Its capabilities acted separately. He wanted the susceptibility and the gentleness that come from an organization alive to harmonious sensations. His body and his soul did not thrill with the same conscious existence. Life was consequently objective to a great degree, and he sought to conquer its visible obstacles rather than enrich and attune its elements within. He lived in a sense of intellectual action inadequately combined with sentient enjoyment. What nature denied him he sought through mental expedients; and his relish

of existence seems to have consisted in operating upon others—a process comparatively indifferent to those who are vividly sensible of enjoyable resources. This exclusive love of power is often the heritage of disappointment,—the alternative for sympathy—the chief resort of those cut off by asceticism, disease, or circumstances from any source of natural pleasure. We see it in women unfavourably constituted or ungenially married, in the deformed, and in the gifted but low-born. They seem to desire to realize everything through will. Their great demand from others is subserviency, and they manifest the greatest impatience at the least nonconformity with their caprices. Indeed coalition with them in thought and action is the only test of friendship or love, for the obvious reason, that they are incapable of fully experiencing the delights of those sentiments which, to such as are more naturally constituted or situated, are their own exceeding reward. That Swift belonged to this order of character, is evident from every page of his biography and not a few of his writings. He was never satisfied in his political relations until he gained a personal influence with his distinguished allies. He desired to be necessary to them as a companion as well as useful to their cause as a writer. He managed his financial interests with precision and economy from a very clear sense of the value of money as an agent of power. He sent forth his tracts, epigrams, and satirical tales anonymously, not heeding reputation, but enjoying keenly

the secret pleasure of impressing himself on other minds and leading public opinion by his will. He had a fondness for patronage on the same principle, and boasted that thirty men of note owed their advancement to his personal influence; among whom were Parnell, Berkeley, Congreve, Rowe, and Steele. The same disposition is apparent in his training of servants, in his dictation in regard to the household arrangements of families he visited, in the oracular terms with which he pronounced upon literature and character, in the overbearing conditions he proposed with his first offer of marriage, in the ceaseless exactions of his social life, and in the authoritative tone of his conversation and writings. To be admired, loved or feared, he demanded from all but dolts; and he did this without any consideration as to his ability to reciprocate the more sacred feeling. Those whom he failed to bully or lure into one of these sentiments, were thoroughly obnoxious to him. In all this we see the arrogance of a passionless intellectuality, the unhesitating claim of pride, the domination of a will unchecked and unsoftened by any of those noble emotions or lapses of tender feeling and earnest desire, that cause a glad surrender of opinion to truth, of individuality to assimilation, of self to a thought or being more dear,—yielding a joy never realized by the love of power, even when its most detested foes or sweetest victims are completely in its remorseless grasp.

The Philanthropist.

WILLIAM ROSCOE.

THE most instructive chapter in the comprehensive records of philosophy, is example. There its principles are illustrated in action; its spirit typified in life. By this agency has the divine Being most perfectly revealed himself; and by it, in the moral economy of his universe, are the virtuous energies of humanity continually renewed. The happiest inspiration of which society is the source, is the influence diffused through it, in various attractive forms, by its most distinguished members. Coleridge has beautifully, and, with his accustomed significance, remarked, that "it is only by celestial observations that even terrestial charts can be constructed scientifically." To gaze steadfastly at the intellectual and moral lights of the world, is at once the criterion and pledge of our own advancement; and in that constellation there are for all of us, some bright, particular stars, which, on account of their proximity to the region of our peculiar circumstances and sympathies, should be most earnestly and studiously regarded. The life of Roscoe is peculiarly interesting in this country, as it furnishes the example of one

who lived and died the active denizen of a commercial community like our own; of one whose native endowments were by no means brilliant, and whose circumstances, as far as they were prosperous, were created by himself; of one who, thus situated, nobly won and modestly wore the wreath of literary honour, the credit of self-denying probity, the name of a philanthropist; and who accomplished this by the simple but sublime energy of his character.

If any extrinsic circumstances could augment the satisfaction with which we shall review the life and comment upon the character before us, they may be found in the fact that we are indebted for our sources of information to the son of him we contemplate: his memoir is an offering of filial respect and gratitude. And notwithstanding the delicacy of the duty, it has been most happily performed.

William Roscoe was born about the middle of the last century (1753), at Mount Pleasant, in, or near the town of Liverpool. His parentage was humble, and in his early years, blessed with maternal fidelity, but unmarked by any indications of intellectual precocity, and not favoured by influences superior to his condition. His own memory could suggest but one or two characteristics of his infant days, and the most prominent of these were a deep and instinctive dislike to restraint, and a fondness for solitary rambling along the river of his native town. At the age of twelve years, the discipline of a common school education was exchanged for a course of life involv-

ing a degree of physical effort, and an opportunity for communion with nature, the genial effects of which, upon so susceptible a being, were such as circumstances of more apparent advantage might have failed in producing. Young Roscoe was called to assist his father in the business of agriculture, and the sale of its products; the intervals of leisure which occurred during these employments, were devoted to reading. Doubtless, the three years passed in this manner, at an age when both body and mind are so liable to receive permanent impressions from slight causes, were very influential in giving solidity to his constitution, and in fitting his intellect and feelings for that maturity of action which so happily followed. "This mode of life," says he in a letter to a friend, "gave health and vigour to my body, and amusement and instruction to my mind; and to this day, I well remember the delicious sleep which succeeded my labours, and from which I was again called at an early hour. If I were now asked whom I considered to be the happiest of the human race, I should answer, those who cultivate the earth by their own hands."

At fifteen, when called upon to adopt a profession, that of a bookseller was at first chosen, and even entered upon; but in a very brief period, attendance upon the shop proved wearisome, and in the end he was articled for six years to an attorney. The duties of his clerkship were frequently arduous, or at least engrossing, and they possessed continually increasing

claims in his view, as upon the future success in the pursuit he had chosen, his family mainly depended for support. Yet from these labours he would ever and anon turn to those less practical, but more attractive subjects of attention, which cheered the sterile and often irksome walks of duty, and turned the springs of thought to finer issues. Shenstone became successively his beloved companion and admired model, till the author of the Deserted Village shared the empire of his young but fervent literary love. A few but choice intimacies were formed; these gradually ripened into friendships which seem to have been singularly productive of mutual good. Under their benign incitement and cheering companionship, Roscoe studied the ancient languages, and was induced by the counsel and aid of one peculiarly gifted and proportionally beloved, to devote that attention to the Italian language and literature which, in after life, was the foundation of his literary success. At this time commenced his habitual cultivation of poetry, in which he acquired a facility and taste that neutralised the effect of severer studies, and imparted a cheerful and elevated excitement to his whole subsequent existence. Yet with all these expanding and improving tastes, the direct business of his youthful years received his first and most faithful care. "It is true," he remarks, "the amusements of poetry, and the incense of praise, constitute of themselves some degree of happiness, and, it may be said, happiness should never be

slighted. But, alas, I am a traveller, and before I intend to indulge myself, I propose to get to the end of my journey. If every beautiful prospect and every shepherd's pipe must allure me out of my road, what probability is there that I shall ever find myself at rest?"

His poetical compositions, written before the age of manhood, indicate the benevolent enterprises toward which the ardent energies of opening life tended, and to which so fair a portion of its noon and evening were devoted,—the abolition of the African slave trade, and the intellectual elevation of his countrymen. The first he promoted in common with many spirits of inferior philanthropy, but in relation to the second, he evinced, even in the morning of life, a deep and discerning benevolence. Then, as ever after, he recognised the necessity of an element that should modify the influences of the commercial world, and cherish the latent sentiment of human nature among the bustling members of a mercantile community. That he was well aware of the requisiteness of an agent more effectual than mere taste in the process of improving society, that he owed his moral growth and the power and purity of his mental efforts to a deeper principle, is not alone evidenced by the general tone of his life and recorded views. At this time, he was the author of an able and forcible tract upon religious duty, the sentiments of which were directly deduced from the teachings of Christianity.

During the year 1774, Mr. Roscoe commenced

practice, being admitted to the king's bench. His assiduity and conscientious spirit in the early, and therefore, most anxious stage of his professional course, is most interestingly evinced in his correspondence with Miss Jane Griffies, whose destiny it was to become the companion, and minister to the happiness of a life, which derived its deepest and most constant satisfaction from domestic influences. These letters (which, it may be observed, passed between the parties while residing in the same town, with the few exceptions, occasioned by the temporary absence of the latter,) breathe a most confiding affection; but it is an affection dignified with a religious and intellectual sentiment, that deepened, while it embalmed it; it was a love evidenced chiefly by an earnest interest in the legitimate good of its object—a love based on similarity of taste and sympathy of purpose; a love which inspired only to improve. "I cannot help pleasing myself," says Mr. R. in one of the first of his epistles, "with the reflection, what an infinite variety of subjects this intercourse will give rise to. Convinced of the perfect confidence that exists between us, how freely might our thoughts expand themselves! The desire of pleasing might cause some little attention to the mode of expression, whilst the certainty of mutual indulgence would prevent us from being apprehensive about trivial inaccuracies."

The first incident which broke in upon the quiet routine of his life, after his marriage, was a profes-

sional visit to London. On this occasion, he experienced, in no small degree, a trial which seems the nearest conceivable approach to the situation of Tantalus—that of being surrounded with the luxuries of literature and art, with the quiet impulse of taste whetted into a keen appetite by their alluring presence, while the want of means condemns it to remain unsatisfied. The additions to his library and collection of prints, were made, therefore, very gradually, and the extreme conscientiousness with which he indulged so innocent a taste, must have greatly enhanced their value.

The introduction of some original sketches into the exhibition of a Society of Art in Liverpool, in 1784, indicates his increasing interest in its practice; but this is still more strongly manifested by the sedulous application of his literary powers to its promotion. During the next year he delivered a course of lectures on the subject, and by means of a poem on the Origin of Engraving, and several valuable contributions of a more fugitive character, laboured to propagate correct notions of the principles of art, and excite an interest in its elevating pursuits. But, perhaps, his feelings and efforts in regard to these objects, are most happily associated with that ready appreciation of the works of art, in all their variety, and that earnest sympathy with, and friendship for professed artists, which is so beautiful a feature of his life and character.

Three years after, however, his philanthropic spirit

was engaged in an enterprise involving results of a more momentous nature, and demanding no small measure of perseverance and moral courage. Its success involved the utter annihilation of one of the most lucrative branches of the commerce of Liverpool; and those pledged to its advancement, were forced, to a greater or less extent, to come forth from the retirement of private life, become identified with a party, and engage in a contest calculated to excite strong feelings of personal and political animosity. These circumstances were so diametrically opposed to the temper and taste of Mr. Roscoe, that had it been a cause of less moral importance, he might have been excused for transferring the responsibility of its defence to others. But intimately allied as was the issue with the cause of humanity, the triumph of Christianity, and the character of his native land, it appealed to the highest principles of his nature; and with him such an appeal was never in vain. In the course of this year, therefore, appeared a poem, entitled the Wrongs of Africa—a pamphlet demonstrating the injustice and impolicy of a traffic in her children; and, soon after, a most masterly reply to a specious attempt to prove its lawfulness on the authority of Scripture. By these and similar writings, by personal intercourse and correspondence with Wilberforce, and other enlightened friends of this great cause, and especially by creating a just public sentiment in one of the strongholds of the trade, Mr.

Roscoe contributed largely to the happy result with which the enterprise was eventually crowned.

It cannot be supposed that the progress of an event which riveted the attention and divided the opinions of the civilized world, failed to attract the anxious attention, and elicit the thoughts and feelings of Roscoe. Accordingly, we find him, at the opening of the French Revolution, acting under the influence of that love of man, and that faith in the ultimate supremacy of his higher nature, whence only springs an enlightened attachment to the principles of freedom. Of all the occasional products of his muse, none have been more popular or excellent in their kind, than those induced by the first brilliant stage of this event. Of his intelligent sympathy and conduct, at this period, his correspondence and public course furnish the most honourable testimony. In his case, as in that of many others, it was the primary means of drawing into political life and effort, talents and sympathies, which, but for so exciting an occasion, would have been devoted exclusively to the more retired interests of literature. But it was not his case, like that of many of his contemporaries, when the dark era of the revolution came on, to lose his faith in the blessedness of genuine political freedom. He discriminated between the effects of a long-sustained state of moral degradation upon the people, and the legitimate spirit of genuine political independence. Both he believed subject to the eternal laws of truth, and therefore deemed it as unphilosophical as sinful, to

refer the recklessness and atrocity of a debased populace, to the pure and generous impulse of true liberty.

Attention to the language of Italy, to which Mr. Roscoe's mind was, as before stated, early directed, soon introduced him to an acquaintance with her standard authors. The study of these, during the whole period we have cursorily reviewed, formed one of the principal sources of his literary recreation. In perusing the historians, particularly Machiavelli and Ammirato, who wrote the Florentine annals, his primitive interest in the character of Lorenzo de Medici was strengthened, and his long, though silently cherished purpose of writing his life, confirmed. The utility of such a work, if successfully executed, none could better understand than himself; yet, even he did not apparently anticipate the numerous indirect benefits of which it was productive. The numerous historical events and interesting circumstances, collateral with the main subject, the attractive form in which the literature and associations of Italy were brought into view, in the course of the work, and the important epoch in the world's history embraced in the period to which it referred, all tended to enhance its practical worth, and the gratification to be derived from its perusal.

The chief difficulty in the way of his design, was the want of adequate materials. Happily, this was removed, by the aid of a friend in Italy, who undertook to forward him the necessary transcripts from original documents, and such works as were not at-

tainable in England, while the sale of two extensive libraries furnished him with yet other resources. Thus furnished, and with the sympathy of many individuals of high literary character, as well as that of his numerous personal friends enlisted in the enterprise, he commenced and assiduously prosecuted it at intervals of leisure.

Upon the publication of the work, in 1796, its success, in every respect, was complete. For the full evidence of this, we must again refer to the correspondence of the author, introduced so largely into the history of his life. Seldom do labours of this nature meet with such a degree of contemporary appreciation, or elicit more sincere and universal testimony to their worth. If ever an author had reason to feel satisfied with the result of his efforts, as regards their immediate reception by the literary public, that one was Roscoe. If he did not altogether escape the critical acumen of the times, he lived to improve by its just strictures, and to lose the memory of its unjust severity, in the various and noble tributes of praise and gratitude which were poured in upon him. He lived to see his own portrait of his favourite translated into several of the modern languages of Europe, to amend and pass it through the press to a perfect edition, and to behold it, like a radiant message, bearing his name through many lands, and awakening attention to those sources of intellectual pleasure, of which he had drank so deeply, and whose renovating waters he would fain see a common

well-spring on the dusty highway of life. From the individual encomiums passed upon Mr. Roscoe, on this occasion, it is difficult to select one, all being, either from their origin or character, peculiarly pleasing. We cannot but notice, however, the allusion to the subject by the author of the Pursuits of Literature, as being from a political opponent, and, consequently, induced solely by a sense of the intrinsic excellence of the work.

> "But hark! what solemn strains from Arno's vales
> Breathe rapture, wafted on the Tuscan gales!
> Lorenzo rears again his awful head,
> And feels his ancient glories round him spread;
> The Muses, starting from their trance, revive,
> And at their Roscoe's bidding, wake and live."

From what has now been said, it is evident that the mere business of his profession had for Mr. Roscoe few attractions. He was engaged, too, in company with another gentleman, in a project which, soon after the publication of his work, began to assume a promising aspect; this was the draining and cultivating an extensive tract of peat-moss in the neighbourhood of Manchester. Looking, in a good measure, to this source of income for support, and with a view of gradually bringing his affairs to a close, and retiring to the more complete enjoyment of his taste, in the course of the year 1796, he relinquished his profession. How singly and sincerely he regarded professional occupation as a means subordinate to a great end, may be inferred from his reply

to a friend who rallied him upon his withdrawing from its responsibilities. There is something peculiarly like a home-thrust in its applicability to ourselves. "Surely man is the most foolish of all animals, and civilized man the most foolish of all men. Anticipation is his curse; and to prevent the contingency of evil, he makes life one continual evil. Health, wisdom, peace of mind, conscience, all are sacrificed to the absurd purpose of heaping up for the use of life more than life can employ, under the flimsy pretext of providing for his children, till practice becomes habit, and we labour on till we are obliged to take our departure, as tired of this world as we are unprepared for the rational happiness of the next."

He now resumed his Italian reading, and this, with the study of Botany, his favourite science, a translation of the Balia, of Luigi Tansillo, his agency in instituting the admirable Athenæum of Liverpool, and the issuing of a new edition of Lorenzo, with other labours of a desultory nature, occupied his time and attention, until the spring of 1799. And then it was, in pursuance of that design of retirement so congenial to his nature, and so promising of intellectual fruits, that he became the possessor of Allerton Hall, in the vicinity of Liverpool. There he at once renewed his literary labours, in the field where his recent laurels were won. In preparing the history of Leo X., he but still further developed,

under additional advantages, the subject so happily begun in the life of Lorenzo.

Scarcely a year had elapsed, when the claims of friendship called him from his elegant retreat into a scene of action more truly business-like in its nature, than the one whence he had lately retired. The family of that friend whose exertions abroad had so signally aided Mr. Roscoe in obtaining interesting and necessary historical documents, asked his counsel and personal assistance in rearranging the affairs of their extensive banking establishment. Circumstances and his own sense of duty, in the end, devolved the conduct of this concern chiefly upon himself, and, in a great measure, identified his pecuniary interests with its success.

The next social and benevolent enterprise in which he seems to have engaged, was the establishment of a botanical garden near town. And his pen at this time was extensively devoted to the advancement of this science, in testimony of which several interesting instances occur in his letters and communications to botanical societies.

The influence of Mr. Roscoe in the private circles, and, indeed, through the whole range of society around him, frequently afforded him opportunities of most happily directing the public mind, and rendered his political opinions well known. This was a prominent cause of his activity during the excitement in relation to the movements on the other side of the Channel, to which we have briefly alluded, and con-

tributed, at the approach of an important political crisis in his own country, to direct towards him the expectant regards of his townsmen. In 1806, he was returned, by the freemen of Liverpool, as a representative in Parliament; and, in accordance with the sense of public duty which characterized his life, he obeyed the call, and carried into the halls of legislation the highmindedness, perseverance, and loyalty to principle, which had secured him the suffrages of his constituents. Here he enjoyed the high satisfaction of urging, with all the power that argument, appeal, and personal influence afforded, the passage of the bill for Catholic Emancipation, and the Abolition of the Slave Trade. The plan of a Reform in Parliament, the principles of which he subsequently most ably defended, was a measure, the happy fulfilment of which he lived to witness. During the next two years, though not officially engaged, he was much occupied in political writing, particularly in recommending peace with France.

Soon after his retirement from public life, he appears, from additions and improvements made upon his estate for the better accommodation of his library and collections, as well as from the literary projects he then conceived, to have meditated a yet more complete devotion to intellectual labour. The most important of his plans were a life of Erasmus, and several translations from the Italian, of high interest. Subsequent circumstances induced him to relinquish these designs. He, however, derived much pleasure,

at this time, from collating and arranging several additional illustrations of his biographies, and especially from a visit at Holkham, devoted to researches among a highly valuable collection of manuscripts and rare works, belonging to his friend, Mr. Coke, who assigned to him the pleasing task of rescuing them from the disorder into which they were plunged, and reproducing their distinctive characters.

But that universal principle, vicissitude, was about to bring upon Mr. Roscoe a series of discipline whereby his moral strength was destined to be severely tested. The banking concern with which he was so intimately connected, owing to the demands of the times and the scarcity of specie, produced by the opening of the American trade, was forced to suspend payment. Mr. Roscoe's honourable feelings obliged him to assume the entire care of the interest of his creditors. By a well-devised plan and temporary compromise, he was confident of being able to discharge all the debts in the space of six years, and still sustain the establishment.

Many untoward circumstances, particularly an unfortunate investment of a large part of their funds, rendered the prospect, at the termination of this long and anxious season of uncongenial toil, increasingly gloomy. In view of such a state of things, he determined upon a sacrifice that can be duly estimated only by him who understands that fellow-feeling for the master minds of our race, and the forms in which they have become familiar, which

springs up and grows strong in the bosom where it is habitually cherished; by him who knows, in its full measure, the happiness of collecting about him the gems of literature and art, connecting them with associations of feeling and circumstance, gazing upon them as upon the faces of friends, and into them as into the oracles of truth; by him, in a word, the idea of whose usefulness, honour, and daily enjoyment is associated indissolubly, in his own mind, with books and products of art, not in their general aspect, but as they have been gathered by the slow accumulation of careful expenditure, and become endeared by years of blessed and ministering companionship, in his own cheerful study. Who will deny to Mr. Roscoe, in the sacrifice of his library and collections, the credit of exercising a degree of lofty principle worthy of human nature? The general character of that library may be inferred from his pursuits; and its value from the catalogue, prepared, with minute exactness, by his own hand, indicating its numerous varieties and its treasures. It is worthy of remark, that no volume or print was reserved, but such as were the sacred tokens of friendship; and although a few of his friends bought at the sale, what they conceived he chiefly wished to retain, he would derive from this considerate act no other advantage than the liberty of repurchasing, and when this was actually done, his conscientiousness led him to dispose of them to Mr. Rathbone, by whom they were presented to the Athenæum, where

they still occupy a separate position. We cannot forbear quoting the sonnet suggested by this event. Familiar as it may have become, it is and will ever be, a beautiful evidence of the not undignified regret of the literary enthusiast relieved by the manly cheerfulness of the intellectual Christian.

"As one who destined from his friends to part,
Regrets his loss, yet hopes again erewhile
To share their converse and enjoy their smile,
And tempers as he may affliction's dart,—
Thus, loved associates! chiefs of elder art!
Teachers of wisdom! who could once beguile
My tedious hours, and lighten every toil,
I now resign you; nor with fainting heart,—
For, pass a few short years, or days, or hours,
And happier seasons may their dawn unfold,
And all your sacred fellowship restore;
When freed from earth, unlimited its powers,
Mind shall with mind direct communion hold,
And kindred spirits meet to part no more."

When, therefore, the dreaded bankruptcy did occur, the only consolation of which such a case admits, was happily ever present to alleviate the sufferings of his delicate mind,—a deep sense of conscientious integrity.

Perhaps the most general principle involved in the leading interests of the age, is the principle of integrity. It is this which lends an aspect of high moral dignity to the pursuits in which the multitude of our day are engaged. In England and this country, commercial enterprise being the predominant object of pursuit, uncompromising integrity is the virtue,

for the exercise of which there is especial and often grand occasion. And while public opinion has been on the advance respecting the legal course proper to be pursued in relation to bankruptcy, the want of a high moral tone in regard to this subject is lamentably obvious. Were it not so, failures, which have bereft hundreds of half their just dues, and left the author of their suffering independent, would not be regarded, as they now are, with any degree of complacency; nor would an individual of this sadly numerous species, be allowed daily to parade himself or the tokens of his pecuniary superiority before the eyes of his abused and remediless creditor. In view of such considerations, enforced as they must be by the experience and reflection of every individual, it is refreshing to mark and appreciate the simple integrity of William Roscoe.

And now the cares of active life were wellnigh ended; the partner of his days had gone before to her rest, and his feet were treading the declivity of life. He had put the finishing touch to an edition of Pope's works, and the Holkham catalogue was completed; what remained, then, for one who had so well sustained the burden and heat of the day, but that he should dedicate its close to recreative employment and repose? With his diminished resources, increased by the grateful contributions of friendship, he accordingly released himself from all bustling or laborious employments, and passed into retirement. Here he prepared for the press a final

edition of Lorenzo, and a work of long standing, upon Monandrian plants—efforts which equal the most vigorous of an earlier period. And although with these his literary labours may be said to have closed, his intellectual and moral activity was beautifully exerted until another world became the scene of its ceaseless exercise. The lovely flowers with which he had bestrown the pathway of his being, were bright and fragrant to the last. Literally may it be said of them, as has been significantly said in another connexion—that they smiled up to him as children to the face of a father. The perception of physical beauty, the intelligent love of nature, the philanthropic spirit, the literary taste, which were the day-stars of his youth, continued their ministry in age; and the holier presence of domestic sympathies, of well-founded friendships, of blessed remembrances, was blending its cheerful influence with the deeper and more inspiring spirit of religion. How applicable to a life so happily passed, and so peacefully closed, are the well-remembered lines of our favourite poet:

"That life was happy: every day he gave
Thanks for the fair existence that was his;
For a sick fancy made him not her slave,
To mock him with her phantom miseries.
No chronic tortures rack'd his aged limb,
For luxury and sloth had nourished none for him.

"And I am glad that he has lived thus long;
And glad that he has gone to his reward;

Nor deem that kindly nature did him wrong,
Softly to disengage the vital chord;
When his weak hand grew palsied, and his eye
Dark with the mists of age, it was his time to die."

We have spoken of the character of William Roscoe as a highly valuable example, and we have seen how little it is indebted to extraordinary occasions for its manifestation; it is as interesting to observe that it owes as little to any singular endowment or unnatural endeavour for its intrinsic worth. To the legitimate culture and exercise of the natural emotions and best impulses of the soul, we cannot but ascribe all that is good or beautiful in its aspect. That process of induration, so proverbially general, never bronzed the sensibilities of Roscoe; the dew of nature was not suffered wholly to evaporate in the heated atmosphere of worldly strife, nor to congeal in the frigid air of an artificial existence. That quality, so deep and morally auspicious—susceptibility—the sharpness of the mental appetites, the yearning of vigorous energies for free play and felicitous exercise, the fervid heat of the coals upon the soul's altar, which a little musing sufficeth to kindle—susceptibility—this he ever possessed, or rather never lost, or the richly freighted influences of improvement would have passed by him as the idle wind.

We confess ourselves disposed to attribute no inconsiderable importance to this view of our subject. If improving agencies are dispensed as liberally

through the intellectual and moral universe, as the elements of physical nature, and are designed to minister to something beyond themselves, to develope mind, they constitute the common birthright of humanity. Like the air and light, they freely and equally occupy space, ranging the wide expanse on the broad wings of universal love, and restrained in their holy mission by nought but human perversity. And is not the essential condition by which alone their rich benefits can be experienced, susceptibility? The piercing beams of the sun bear no images of beauty to the closed eye, and the evening breeze wafts no refreshment to the brow unbared to its breath. What wonder, then, if nature and Providence sometimes fail to awaken the spirit steeled by indifference or shrouded in self? In the life and character of Roscoe, we see nurtured, with a beautiful and holy care,—

——"Those first affections,
Those shadowy recollections,
Which, be they what they may,
Are yet the fountain light of all our day,
Are yet a master light of all our seeing;
Uphold us,—cherish,—and have power to make
Our noisy years seem moments in the being
Of the eternal Silence; truths that wake
To perish never;
Which neither listlessness nor mad endeavour,
Nor man nor boy,
Nor all that is at enmity with joy,
Can utterly abolish or destroy."*

* The noble ode of Wordsworth, from which these lines are

The most remarkable peculiarity in the character of Roscoe, is its rare combination of active with quiet virtues; of reflective with practical excellence; of refined sentiment and thought, with perfect simplicity of manner and effort. Its distinguishing good, as an example, is the lesson of just self-development which it so pleasingly unfolds. Throughout that long life of more than eighty years, in its early struggles, amid its honourable fame, and during the various periods of literary, political, or professional activity, by which that character was tried and formed, we behold the native supremacy of the moral nature uninvaded. And it is impossible not to recognise in this the true secret of Roscoe's success, the source of those intellectual and social results which have hallowed his memory, the means and the method by the aid of which, in comparatively ordinary circumstances, and with comparatively common capacities, he identified himself with all the leading benevolent enterprises of the day, rendered valuable contributions to the literature of his native country, and drew, in broad relief, even from the calm tenor and narrow scene of his life, the deathless lineaments of an harmoniously beautiful character.

And, be it remembered, that this active and equable spirit, this happy balance of the several faculties and

taken, was recited by the late S. T. Coleridge, to Baron Von Humboldt, who learned, with much surprise, that it was the work of a living English poet, declaring he should have attributed it to the age of Elizabeth.

sentiments, was ever calmly and prevailingly operative. We feel that the stripling, who mourned over the dying agonies of the bird his own hand had destroyed on the banks of the Mersey, and the aged man who years afterwards stood beside a bed of lilies in his little garden, and compared their frailty with his own, is one and the same being. In opposition to a very popular prejudice, he succeeded in uniting literature and business, and general philanthropy with domestic duty, without detriment to either. He was an amateur and a literary man; but benevolent sentiment was intimately associated with the enjoyments of both. While carrying on a correspondence which connected him with the master spirits of the age, he could yet be sedulously attentive to the interests of an unfriended artist; sympathizing in the magnanimous character of a cultivated Florentine nobleman, and deeming it unappreciated, he wrote his history. How constant, too, was his fidelity to nature, and how bountifully did she reward that allegiance! It was in her invigorating embrace that his young spirit waxed strong, and, freed from the baneful excitements of modern education, it knew no precocious development, no premature decay. The cares of business could not supersede an habitual communion with her influences, nor studious zeal allure him from obedience to her laws. He possessed a delightful inheritance in the kingdom of letters, and ever and anon retired thither; but the field of effort assigned him by the Creator, was the world;

he mingled in its strife, and shed abroad the blessedness of an improving activity. Yet beneath the agitated or listless tide of his common existence, swelled and deepened an under current of meditative being. He imbibed the nutritive elements of spiritual life, as they came forth with the solemnity and effulgence of the starry host, from the deep teachings of experience,—burst in gladness, as tributary streams, from the converse of intellectual humanity; or rose, like the sunlit mists of the ocean, from the wide domain of nature,—sitting meekly, the while, at the feet of Jesus of Nazareth.

Such is, indeed, one of those beings whom no nation can appropriate; universality characterized his philanthropy, and now that the "natural canonization" of death has hallowed his example, it is, and should be regarded as a common blessing. His countrymen have felt most nearly its holy influence, and among them will for ever be the local memorials of his glory. Italy, though her classic ground was never pressed by his pilgrim feet, recognises in his works the beautiful evidences of a deep, philosophical interest in her literature, admiration for her great men, and sympathy in her woes. And to us there is a new scene of meditative enjoyment in our fatherland. Before we reach the sacred precincts of Westminster, or stroll along the green banks of the Avon, we shall linger with respectful and moving interest beside the monument to the memory of William Roscoe, in the churchyard of Liverpool.

The Humorist.

CHARLES LAMB.

In adding our tribute to the memory of Lamb, we are conscious of personal associations of peculiar and touching interest. We recall the many listless hours he has beguiled; and the very remembrance of happy moments induced by his quiet humour, and pleasing reveries inspired by his quaint descriptions and inimitable pathos, is refreshing to our minds. It is difficult to realize that these feelings have reference to an individual whose countenance we never beheld, and the tones of whose voice never fell upon our ear. Frequent and noted instances there are, in the annals of literature, of attempts, on the part of authors, to introduce themselves to the intimate acquaintance of their readers. In portraying their own characters in those of their heroes, in imparting the history of their lives in the form of an epic poem, a popular novel, or through the more direct medium of a professed autobiography, writers have aimed at a striking presentation of themselves. The success of such attempts is, in general, very limited. Like letters of introduction, they, indeed, prove passports

to the acquaintance, but not necessarily to the friendship of those to whom they are addressed. At best, they ordinarily afford us an insight into the mind of the *author*, but seldom render us familiar and at home with the *man*. Charles Lamb, on the contrary,—if our own experience does not deceive us—has brought himself singularly near those who have once heartily entered into the spirit of his lucubrations. We seem to know his history, as if it were that of our brother, or earliest friend. The sadness of his "objectless holidays,"—the beautiful fidelity of his first love, the monotony of his long clerkship, and the strange feeling of leisure succeeding its renunciation, the excitement of his "first play," the zest of his reading, the musings of his daily walk, and the quietude of his fireside, appear like visions of actual memory. His image, now bent over a huge leger, in a dusky counting-house, and now threading the thoroughfares of London, with an air of abstraction, from which nothing recalls him but the outstretched hand of a little sweep, an inviting row of worm-eaten volumes upon an old book-stall, or the gaunt figure of a venerable beggar; and the same form sauntering through the groves about Oxford in the vacation solitude, or seated in a little back study, intent upon an antiquated folio, appear like actual reminiscences rather than pictures of the fancy. The face of his old schoolmaster is as some familiar physiognomy; and we seem to have known Bridget Elia from infancy, and to have loved her, too, notwithstanding her one

"ugly habit of reading in company." Indeed we can compare our associations of Charles Lamb only to those which would naturally attach to an intimate neighbour with whom we had, for years, cultivated habits of delightful intercourse,—stepping over his threshold, to hold sweet commune, whenever weariness was upon our spirits and we desired cheering or amiable companionship. And when death actually justified the title affixed to our friend's most recent papers—which we had fondly regarded merely as an additional evidence of his unique method of dealing with his fellow-beings,—when they really proved the *last* essays of Elia, we could unaffectedly apply to him the touching language with which an admired poet has hallowed the memory of a brother bard:—

> "Green be the turf above thee,
> Friend of my better days,
> None knew thee, but to love thee,
> Nor named thee, but to praise."

And were it only for the peculiar species of fame which Lamb's contributions to the light literature of his country have obtained him,—were it only for the valuable lesson involved in this tributary heritage,—in the method by which it was won,—in the example with which it is associated, there would remain ample cause for congratulation among the real friends of human improvement; there would be sufficient reason to remember, gratefully and long, the gifted and amiable essayist. Instead of the feverish passion

for reputation, which renders the existence of the majority of professed *litterateurs* of the present day, a wearing and anxious trial, better becoming the dust and heat of the arena than the peaceful shades of the academy. A calm and self-reposing spirit pervades and characterizes the writings of Lamb. They are obviously the offspring of thoughtful leisure; they are redolent of the *otium;* and in this consists their peculiar charm. We are disposed to value this characteristic highly, at a time which abounds, as does our age, with a profusion of forced and elaborate writings. It is truly delightful to encounter a work, however limited in design and unpretending in execution, which revives the legitimate idea of literature, —which makes us feel that it is as essentially spontaneous as the process of vegetation, and is only true to its source and its object, when instinct with freshness and freedom. No mind restlessly urged by a morbid appetite for literary fame, or disciplined to a mechanical development of thought, could have originated the attractive essays we are considering. They indicate quite a different parentage. A lovely spirit of contentment, a steadfast determination towards a generous culture of the soul, breathes through these mental emanations. Imaginative enjoyment,—the boon with which the Creator has permitted man to meliorate the trying circumstances of his lot, is evidently the great recreation of the author, and to this he would introduce his readers. It is interesting to feel, that among the many accomplished men, whom

necessity or ambition incline to the pursuit of literature, there are those who find the time and possess the will to do something like justice to their own minds. Literary biography is little else than a history of martyrdoms. We often rise from the perusal of a great man's life, whose sphere was the field of letters, with diminished faith in the good he successfully pursued. The story of disappointed hopes, ruined health, a life in no small degree isolated from social pleasure and the incitements which nature affords, can scarcely be relieved of its melancholy aspect by the simple record of literary success. Earnestly as we honour the principle of self-devotion, our sympathy with beings of a strong intellectual and imaginative bias is too great not to awaken, above every other consideration, a desire for the self-possession and native exhibition of such a heaven-implanted tendency. We cannot but wish that natures thus endowed should be true to themselves. We feel that, in this way, they will eventually prove most useful to the world. And yet one of the rarest results which such men arrive at, is self-satisfaction in the course they pursue—we do not mean as regards the success, but the direction of their labours. Sir James Mackintosh continually lamented, in his diary, the failure of his splendid intentions,—consoled himself with the idea of additional enterprises, and finally died without completing his history. Coleridge has left only, in a fragmentary and scattered form, the philosophical system he proposed to deve-

lope. Both these remarkable men passed intellectual lives, and evolved, in conversation and fugitive productions, fruits which are worthy of a perennial existence; yet they fell so far short of their aims, they realized so little of what they conceived, that an impression the most painful remains upon the mind that, with due susceptibility, contemplates their career. We find, therefore, an especial gratification in turning from such instances, to a far humbler one indeed,—but still to a man of genius, who richly enjoyed his pleasant and sequestered inheritance in the kingdom of letters, and whose comparatively few productions bear indubitable testimony to a mind at ease,—a felicitous expansion of feeling,—an imaginative and yet contented life. It is as illustrative of this, that the essays of Elia are mainly valuable.

In our view, the form of these writings is a great recommendation. We confess a partiality for the essay. In the literature of our vernacular tongue, it shines conspicuous, and is environed with the most pleasing associations. To the early English essayists is due the honour of the first and most successful endeavours to refine the language and manners of their country. The essays of Dr. Johnson, Goldsmith, Addison, and Steele, while they answered a most important immediate purpose, still serve as instructive disquisitions and excellent illustrations of style. The essay is to prose literature what the sonnet is to poetry; and as the narrow limits of the latter have enclosed some of the most beautiful poetic

imagery, and finished expressions of sentiment within the compass of versified writing, so many of the most chaste specimens of elegant periods, and of animated and embellished writing, exist in the form of essays. The lively pen of Montaigne, the splendid rhetoric of Burke, and the vigorous argument of John Foster, have found equal scope in essay-writing: and among the various species of composition at present in vogue, how few can compare with this in general adaptation. Descriptive sketches and personal traits, speculative suggestions and logical deductions, the force of direct appeal, the various power of illustration, allusion and comment, are equally available to the essayist. His essay may be a lay-sermon or a satire, a criticism or a reverie. "Of the words of men," says Lord Bacon, "there is nothing more sound and excellent than are letters; for they are more natural than orations and more advised than sudden conferences." Essays combine the qualities here ascribed to epistolary composition; indeed, they may justly be regarded as letters addressed to the public; embodying—in the delightful style which characterizes the private correspondence of cultivated friends—views and details of universal interest.

There is more reason to regret the decline of essay-writing, from the fact, that the forms of composition now in vogue, are so inferior to it both in intrinsic excellence and as vehicles of thought. There is, indeed, a class of writers whose object is, professedly and solely to amuse; or if a higher purpose enter

into their design, it does not extend beyond the conveyance of particular historical information. But the majority of prominent authors cherish, as their great end, the inculcation of certain principles of action, theories of life, or views of humanity. We may trace, in the works of the most justly admired writers of our own day, a favourite sentiment or theory pervading, more or less, the structure of their several volumes, and constantly presenting itself under various aspects, and in points of startling contrast or thrilling impression. We honour the deliberate and faithful presentation of a theory, on the part of literary men, when they deem it essential to the welfare of their race. Loyalty to such an object bespeaks them worthy of their high vocation; and we doubt if an author can be permanently useful to his fellow-beings and true to himself, without such a light to guide, and such an aim to inspire. Dogmatical attachment to mere opinion is doubtless opposed to true progression in thought; but fidelity in the development and vivid portraiture of a sentiment knit into the well-being of man, and coincident with his destiny, is among the most obvious of literary obligations. Something of chivalric interest is attached to "Sidney's Defence of Poesy;" the anxiety for the reform of conventional customs and modes of thinking in society, so constantly evinced in the pages of the Spectator, commands our sympathy and respect; and we think the candid objector to Wordsworth's view of his divine art, cannot but honour the

steadiness with which he has adhered to, and unfolded it. Admitting, then, the dignity of such literary ends,—the manner in which they can be most effectually accomplished, must often be a subject of serious consideration.

It is generally taken for granted, that the public will give ear to no teacher who cannot adroitly practise the expedient so beautifully illustrated by Tasso, in the simile of the chalice of medicine with a honeyed rim. True as it is, that in an age surfeited with books of every description, there exists a kind of necessity for setting decoys afloat upon the stream of literature—is not the faith in literary lures altogether too perfect? Does the mental offspring we have cherished, obtain the kind of attention we desire, when ushered into the world arrayed in the garb of fiction? The experiment, we acknowledge, succeeds in one respect. The inviting dress will attract the eyes of the multitude; but how few will penetrate to the theory, appreciate the moral, or enter into the thoughts to which the fanciful costume is only the drapery and framework? The truth is, the very object of writers who would present a philosophical problem through the medium of a novel, is barely recognised. Corinne is still regarded as a romance *sui generis*. Several efforts of the kind, on the part of living British writers of acknowledged power, seem to have utterly failed of their purpose, as far as the mass of readers, whom they were especially intended to affect, are concerned. The plan in such instances,

is strictly psychological. Public attention, however, is at once riveted on the plot and details; and some strong delineation of human passion, some trivial error in the external sketching, some over intense or too minute personation of feeling, suffices to condemn the work in the view—we do not say how justly—even of the discriminating. Now we are confident, that should the writers in question choose the essay as a vehicle of communication, their success in many cases would be more complete. Their ideas of life, of a foreign land, of modern society, or of human destiny, presented in this shape, with the graces of style, the attraction of anecdote, and the vivacity of wit and feeling, could not but find their way to the only class of readers who will ever estimate such labours—those who read to excite thought, as well as beguile time; to gratify an intellectual taste as well as amuse an ardent fancy. The novel, too, is in its very nature ephemeral. The very origin of the word associates such productions with the gazettes and magazines—the temporary caskets of literature. And with the exception of Scott's, and a few admirable historical romances, novels seem among the most frail of literary tabernacles. Now, in reference to the class of authors to whom we have alluded, those who have a definite and important point in view, who are enthusiastic in behalf of a particular moral or mental enterprise, the evanescent nature of the popular vehicle is an important consideration. We would behold a more permanent personification of their systems, a more lasting testimony of their interest in

humanity. And such we consider the essay. When presented, condensed, and embellished in this more primitive form, a fair opportunity will be afforded for the candid examination of their sentiments; and we are persuaded that these very ideas, thus arranged and disseminated, will possess a weight and an interest which they can never exhibit when displayed in the elaborate and desultory manner incident to popular fiction. An interesting illustration of these remarks may be found in the circumstance that many intelligent men, who are quite inimical to Bulwer, as a novelist, have become interested in his mind by the perusal of "England and the English," and "The Student"—works which are essentially specimens of essay-writing. The dramatic form of composition has recently been adopted in England, to subserve the theoretical purposes of authors. This, it must be confessed, is a decided improvement upon the more fashionable method; and the favour with which it has been received, is sufficiently indicative of the readiness of the public to become familiar with nobler models of literature.

We are under no slight obligations to Charles Lamb, for so pleasantly reviving a favourite form of English composition. We welcome Elia as the Spectator-*redivivus*. It is interesting to be amused and instructed after the manner of that delectable coterie of lay-preachers, humorists, and critics, of which Sir Roger de Coverley was so distinguished a member. It is peculiarly agreeable to be talked to in a book, as if the writer addressed himself to us par-

ticularly. Next to a long epistle from an entertaining friend, we love, of all things in the world, a charming essay; — a concise array of ideas — a unique sketch, which furnishes subjects for an hour's reflection, or gives rise to a succession of soothing day-dreams. Few books are more truly useful than such as can be relished in the brief intervals of active or social life, which permit immediate appreciation, and, taken up when and where they may be, present topics upon which the attention can at once fix itself, and trains of speculation into which the mind easily glides. To such a work we suppose a celebrated writer alludes, in the phrase "parlour window-seat book." Collections of essays are essentially of this order. We would not be understood, however, as intimating that this kind of literature is especially unworthy of studious regard;—Bacon's Essays alone would refute such an idea; but from its conciseness and singleness of aim, the essay may be enjoyed in a brief period, and when the mind is unable to attach itself to more elaborate reading. A volume of essays subserves the purpose of a set of cabinet pictures, or a portfolio of miniature drawings; they are the *multum in parvo* of literature; and, perused, as they generally are, in moments of respite from ordinary occupation, turned to on the spur of mental appetite, they not unfrequently prove more efficient than belles-lettres allurements of greater pretension. It is seldom that any desirable additions are made in this important department

of writing; and among the contributions of the present age, the essays of Elia will deservedly hold an elevated rank.

Much of the interest awakened by these papers, has been ascribed to the peculiar phraseology in which they are couched. Doubtless, this characteristic has had its influence; but we think an undue importance has been given it, and we feel that the true zest of Elia's manner is as spontaneous as his ideas, and the shape in which they naturally present themselves. If we analyze his mode of expression, we shall find its charm consists not a little in the expert variation rather than in a constant maintenance of style. He understood the proper time and place to introduce an illustration; he knew when to serve up one of his unequalled strokes of humour, and when to change the speculative for the descriptive mood. He had a happy way of blending anecdote and portraiture; he makes you see the place, person, or thing, upon which he is dwelling; and, at the moment your interest is excited, presents an incident, and then, while you are all attention, imparts a moral, or lures you into a theorizing vein. He personifies his subject, too, at the appropriate moment; nor idealizes, after the manner of many essayists, before the reader sympathizes at all with the real picture. Lamb's diction breathes the spirit of his favourite school. He need not have told us of his partiality for the old English writers. Every page of Elia bears witness to his frequent and fond commu-

nion with the rich ancient models of British literature. Yet the coincidence is, in no degree, that which obtains between an original and a copyist. The tinge which Lamb's language has caught from intimacy with the quaint folios he so sincerely admired, is a reflected hue, like that which suffuses the arch of clouds far above the setting sun; denoting only the delightful influence radiated upon the mind which loves to dwell devotedly upon what is disappearing, and turns with a kind of religious interest, from the new-born luminaries which the multitude worship, to hover gratefully round the shrine of the past. If any modern lover of letters deserved a heritage in the sacred garden of old English literature, that one was Charles Lamb. Not only did he possess the right which faithful husbandry yields, but his disposition and taste rendered him a companion meet for the noble spirits that have immortalized the age of Elizabeth. In truth, he may be said to have been on more familiar terms with Shakspeare, than with the most intimate of his cotemporaries; and it may be questioned whether the Religio Medici, that truly individual creed, had a more devout admirer in its originator, than was Elia. He assures us that he was "shy of facing the prospective," and no antiquarian cherished a deeper reverence for old china, or the black letter. Most honestly, therefore, came our author by that charming relish of olden time, which sometimes induces in our minds, as we read his lucubrations, a lurking

doubt whether, by some mischance, we have not fallen upon an old author in a modern dress.

There is another feature in the style of these essays, to which we are disposed to assign no inconsiderable influence. We allude to a certain confessional tone, that is peculiarly attractive. There is something exceedingly gratifying to the generality of readers in personalities. On the same principle that we are well pleased to become the *confidant* of a friend, and open our breasts to receive the secret of his inmost experience, we readily become interested in a writer who tells us, in a candid, *naïve* manner, the story not merely of his life, in the common acceptation of the term, but of his private opinions, humours, eccentric tastes, and personal antipathies. A tone of this kind, is remarkably characteristic of Lamb. And yet there is in it nothing egotistical; for we may say of him as has been said of his illustrious schoolfellow, whom he so significantly, and, as it were, prophetically called, "the inspired charity boy;"—that, "in him the individual is always merged in the abstract and general." Writers have not been slow to avail themselves of the advantage of thus occasionally and incidentally presenting glimpses of their private notions and sentiments; indeed, this has been called the age of confessions; but with Elia, they are so delicately and yet so familiarly imparted, that they become a secret charm inwrought through the whole tissue of what he denominates his "weaved up follies." There

are passages scattered through this volume, which exemplify the very perfection of our language. There are successive periods, so adroitly adapted to the sentiment they embody, so easy and expressive, and, at the same time, so unembellished, that they suggest a new idea of the capabilities of our vernacular. There are words, too, at which we should pause, if they were indited by another, to institute a grave inquiry into their legitimacy, or, perchance, prefer against their author the charge of senseless affectation. But with what we know of Elia, in catching ourselves at such a process, we could not but waive the ceremony, and say of it as he has said of parting with a genial dainty,—"it argues an insensibility."

Another striking trait of the Essays of Elia, is the familiarity of their style. In this respect they frequently combine the freedom of oral with the more deliberative spirit of epistolary expression. We have already alluded to one effect of this method of address; it annihilates the distance between the reader and author, and, so to speak, brings them face to face. Facility in this kind of writing, is one of the principal elements in what is called magazine talent. It consists in maintaining a conversational tone while discussing a topic of great interest in a humorous way, or making a light one the nucleus for spirited, amusing, or instructive ideas. The dearth of this popular tact in this country, and its fertility in England, are well known. We think the discrepance

can be accounted for by reference to the essential difference in the social habits of the two countries. The literary clubs are the nurseries of this attractive talent in Great Britain. The custom of convening for intellectual recreation, favours the growth of a ready expression of thought, and of a direct and inviting flow of language. Writers are habituated to an attractive style, by being trained in a school of conversation. Intimate connexion with the best minds, not only informs and kindles, but induces vivacity of delivery both in speech and writing. We can conceive, for instance, of no inspiration even to the colloquial powers of an intelligent man, like direct communion with such an individual as Mackintosh; and we can find no cause for wonder, that one blessed with the companionship of the literati of London and Edinburgh, should acquire the power of talking on paper in a delightful and finished manner. Such society affords, if we may be allowed the expression, a kind of intellectual gymnasium, where the art of interesting with the pen may be, and naturally is, acquired by such as are endowed with native wit, and reflective or graphic ability. With us the case is so widely different, the opportunities for general and exciting association so rare, that it is no matter of surprise that magazine talent, as it is termed, should be of slow growth. How far Charles Lamb was indebted to his social privileges for his style, we are not prepared to say. Yet there are numerous indications of the happy influence of which we speak,

interspersed through his commentaries on men and things. We refer, of course, altogether to the style; for as to the ideas, they are entirely his own, bearing the genuine stamp of originality. It seems essential to an efficient literature, that those interested in its culture should be brought into frequent contact with each other, and with general society. A poet who would evolve representations of humanity in abstract forms, who would present models beyond and above his age, may indeed find, in the shades of retirement, greater scope, and a less disturbed scene wherein to rear his imaginary fabric; and the philosopher whose aim is the application of truth to history, or the delineation of some important principle in science or art, doubtless requires comparative solitude. The position of both is contemplative. The fancy of the one would plume itself for flight, and the eyry of the noblest birds is always among uninvaded haunts; the reflection of the other would grapple with the abstract, and the most intense elemental strife of nature is ever amid her lofty cloud-retreats, or solitary depths. But the writer who would beguile, amuse, or teach his cotemporaries by some winning literary device, who would accomplish all these objects at once, and "do it quickly," must mix with his fellow-creatures, and make a study of the passers-by. He must hold familiar intercourse with the ruling school; not to adopt their principles, but to become disciplined by their conversation; and he should note the multitude warily, in order to discover

both the way and the means of affecting them. The legitimate essayist has need of a rich vocabulary, and a flexible manner; a quick perception, and a candid address. And these equipments, if not obtainable, are at least improvable, by social aids. Conversation, were it not utterly misunderstood and perverted, might prove a mighty agent in the culture of the noblest of human powers, and the sweetest of human graces. There was a beautiful fidelity to nature in the habits of the philosophers of the Garden. There are few pictures so delightful in ancient history, as the noble figure of a Grecian sage moving through a rural resort, or beneath a spacious portico, imparting to his youthful companion lessons of wisdom, or curbing his own advanced mind to pioneer that of his less mature auditor through the early mazes of mental experience. The teeming presence of nature and art in all their variety and eloquence, the appeal to sympathy, lurking in the very tones of wisdom, the mere inspiration of human presence, combine to create an impression infinitely more vivid than lonely gleanings among written lore could awaken. We are slow to comprehend the capabilities of conversation, or we should cultivate it sedulously, and with a deeper faith. The single effect which we have noticed in relation to English literature, is of itself no inconsiderable argument. If to social culture we may in a great degree ascribe the exuberance of talent for periodical literature on the other side of the water, there is surely no small inducement to elevate and quicken

the conversational spirit of our country; for whatever rank be assigned to this form of writing, its history sufficiently attests the great influence it is capable of exerting, and the important purposes it may subserve. Elia, we think, gives very satisfactory indications of his origin. Without the local allusions and constant references to native authors, there is something about him which smacks of London. Individual as Lamb is, he is not devoid of national characteristics; and a reader, well aware of the composite influences operative upon men of letters who hail from the British metropolis, will readily discover, though not informed of the fact, that Elia was blessed with a score of honourable friends, who have contributed to the literary fame of Great Britain.

Lamb is not singular in his attachment to minutiæ; it is characteristic of the literature of the day. In former times, writers dealt in the general; now they are devoted to the particular. In almost every book of travels and work of fiction, we are entertained, or rather the attempt is made to entertain us, with exceedingly detailed descriptions of the features of a landscape, the grouping in a picture, or the several parts of a fashionable dress. By such wearisome nomenclature, it is expected that an adequate conception will be imparted, when, in many cases, a single phrase, revealing the *impression* made by these objects, would convey more than a hundred such inventories. Lamb, by virtue of his nice perception, renders details more effective than we should imagine

was practicable. In a single line, we have the peculiarities of a person presented; and by a brief mention of the gait, demeanour, or perhaps a single habit, the ceremony of introduction is over; we not only stand and look in the direction we are desired, but we *see* the object, be it an old bencher, or a grinning chimney-sweep, an ancient courtyard, or a Quaker meeting, a roast pig, or an old actor, Captain Jackson, or a poor wretch in the pillory, consoling himself by fanciful soliloquies. We have compared essays, in their general uses, to a set of cabinet pictures. Elia's are peculiarly susceptible of the illustration. They are the more valuable, inasmuch as something of the mellow hue of old paintings broods over them; here and there a touch of beautiful sadness, that reminds us of Raphael; now a line of penciling overflowing with nature, which brings some favourite Flemish scene to mind; and again, a certain softness and delicate finish that whisper of Claude Lorraine.

There are two points in which Charles Lamb was eminent, where tolerable success is rare: these are pathos and humour. He understood how to deal with the sense of the humorous and pathetic. He seems to have been intuitively learned in the secret and delicate nature of these attributes of the mind; or rather, it would appear that his own nature, in these respects, furnished a happy criterion by which to address the same feelings in others. We cannot analyze, however casually, the humour and pathos of Elia, without

perceiving that they are based on a discerning, and, if the expression may be allowed, a sentimental fellow-feeling for his kind. So ready and true was this feeling, that we find him entering, with the greatest facility, into the experience of human beings whom the mass of society scarcely recognise as such. He talks about a little chimney-sweep, an aged mendicant, or an old actor, as if he had, in his own person, given proof of the doctrine to which his ancient friend, Sir Thomas Browne, inclined, and actually, by a kind of metempsychosis, experienced these several conditions of life. His pathos and humour are, for the most part, descriptive; he appeals to us, in an artist-like and dramatic way, by pictures; we are not wearied with any preparatory and worked-up process; we are not led to anticipate the effect; but our associations are skilfully awakened; an impression is unostentatiously conveyed, and a smile or tear first leads us to inquire into the nature of the spell. It is as though, in riding along a sequestered road, we should suddenly pass a beautiful avenue, and catch a glimpse of a garden, a statue, an old castle, or some object far down its green vista, so interesting that a reminiscence, an anticipation, or, perchance, a speculative reverie, is thereby at once awakened. Endeavours to touch the feelings or excite quiet mirth fail, generally, because the design is too obvious, or a strain of exaggeration is indulged in, fatal to the end in view. Frequently, too, the call upon our mirthful or compassionate propensities is too direct and strong.

These feelings are not seldom appealed to, as if they were passions, and to be excited by passionate means. Indignation, enthusiasm, and all powerful impulses, are doubtless to be roused by fervent appeals; but readers are best allured into a laugh, and it is by gentle encroachments upon its empire, that the heart is best moved to sympathy. In drawing his pictures, Lamb indulged not in caricature. It is his truth, not less than his quaintness and minute touches, that entertains and affects us. He avoids, too, the vulgar modes of illustration. Not by descriptions of physiognomy or costume, does he excite our risible tendencies, nor thinks he to win our pity by over-drawn statements of the insignia and privations of poverty. Elia is no poor metaphysician. He comprehends the delicacy of touch required in the limner who would impressively delineate, even in a quaint style, any element or form of humanity. By what would almost seem a casual suggestion, we often have a conception imparted worth scores of wire-drawn exemplifications. Well aware was our essayist that a single leaf whirled by the breeze of accident upon the soul's clear fountain, would awaken successive undulations of thought; he was versed in the philosophy of association; he possessed the susceptibility of an affectionate nature, and that fine sense of the *appropriate* which is one of the most valuable of our insights, and accordingly, he caused his inimitable shades of humour and pathos "to faintly mingle, yet distinctly rise." He wishes us to realize the sufferings of poor children, and, by

briefly indicating the mere tenor of their street-talk, causes our hearts to melt at the piteous accents of *care*, from lips so young. He would vindicate that excellent precept in the counsel of old Polonius,—"Neither a borrower nor a lender be;" and draws such a full-length portrait of the former character, that when one of the species has once inspected it, he can never again lay the flattering unction of self-ignorance to his heart. He reprimands book-stealers by describing his own impoverished shelves, and points out the blessings of existence, by quaintly discussing the deprivations attendant on its loss. The anniversaries of time pass not by without their several merits being canvassed by his pen; and although he tells us little that is absolutely new, he holds the light of his pleasant humour up to the faces of these annual visitants, and thenceforth their features possess greater reality and are more easily recognised. Not a little of Lamb's humour is shadowed forth in the subjects of his essays. Had we fallen upon such titles in the index of any other anonymous author, we should have set him down as one who, in straining after the novel, evidenced a morbid taste; but there is nothing more characteristic of Elia, than the topics he selects. They are as legitimate as an undoubted signature. Should this be questioned, let the treatment bestowed upon these uninvestigated themes be examined. They will prove as well adapted to their author's genius as the Scottish peasant's life was to the muse of Burns, or the praise of Laura

to Petrarch. Who should have written the history of England, among the many who have tried their skill in that illustrious task, may be a matter of doubt; and to what American Scott we are to look for a series of romances illustrative of our history, is yet a subject of speculation; but no man, of ordinary perception, we presume, can for a moment question that "The Melancholy of Tailors,"—"The Character of an Undertaker,"—"The Praise of Chimney-sweepers,"—the "Inconveniences of being Hanged," and sundry kindred subjects were reserved for the pen of Elia.

That writer is wise who avails himself of a somewhat familiar idea, in presenting his mental creations to the public. There is need of as much consideration in bestowing a name upon an essay or a poem, which we wish should be read, as in naming a child whom we would dedicate to fame. The same reasons for circumspection obtain in both cases. The more original the appellation, provided it is not utterly foreign to all general associations, the better. But it is essential that there should be something which will create an interest at a glance. Our essayist has been happy in his choice of subjects; his wit failed him not here. Though no one has previously written the "Praise of Chimney-sweepers," yet every one sees the dusky urchins daily, and would fain know what can be said in their behalf. Most people have noticed the "Melancholy of Tailors," and are glad to find that some one has undertaken philosophically to

explain it. The headings of all Elia's papers are exactly such as would beguile us into reading when we desire to enter the region of quiet thought, and forget our cares in some literary pastime. There is one element of genius, the influence of which we have never seen acknowledged, that ever impresses our minds in reflecting on the themes to which gifted men apply themselves. We allude to a certain daring which induces them to grapple with topics, and give expression to thoughts, which many have mused upon without thinking of giving them utterance. There is much of Byron's poetry which seems almost like a literal transcript of our past or occasional emotions; the more powerful and acknowledged a genius, the more fervently do we declare the coincidence of our feelings with his delineations. Many odd speculations have occurred to us in reference to the strange subjects to which Lamb is partial; we respond to most of his portraitures, and sympathize in the feelings he avows. His humour and pathos, therefore, are true, singularly, beautifully true, to human nature; in this consists their superiority. Many have aimed at the same results in a similar way; but the genius of Lamb, in this department, has achieved no ordinary triumph.

The drama was a rich source of pleasure and reflection to Lamb. During a life passed almost wholly in the metropolis, the theatre afforded him constant recreation, and the species of excitement his peculiar genius required. It was to him an im-

portant element in the imaginative being he cherished. By means of it, he continually renewed and brightened the rich vein of sentiment inherent in his nature. To him it addressed language rife with the meaning which characterized its ancient voice,—full of suggestive and impressive eloquence. Deeply versed in the whole range of dramatic literature, master of the philosophy of Shakspeare, and overflowing with a highly cultivated taste for the dramatic art, the drama was ranked by Elia among the redeeming things of life. He did not coldly recognise, but deeply felt, its importance to modern society. Surrounded by the bustle, the worldliness and the material agencies of a populous capital, he daily saw man struggling on beneath the indurating pressure of necessity, or presenting only artificial aspects,—and to the strong and true representation of human nature, on the stage and in the works of the dramatist, he looked as a noble means of renovation. It gratified his humane spirit, that the poor mechanic should lose, for an hour, the memory of his toilsome lot, in sympathy with some vivid personation of that love which once sent a glow to his now hollow temples; that the creature of fashion and pride should, occasionally, be led back to the primal fountains of existence by the hand of Thespis; that an unwonted tear should sometimes be drawn, like a pearl from the deep, to the eye of some fair worldling, at the mighty appeal of nature, in the voice of an affecting portrayer of her truth. Elia had faith in the legitimate drama, as the

native offspring of the human mind, significant of its successive eras, and as fitted to supply one of its truest and deepest wants; and well he might have had,—for its history was as familiar to him as a household tale; he had explored its chronicles with the assiduity of an enthusiast, and the acumen of a virtuoso; he had garnered up its gems as the true jewels of his country's literature; he honoured its worthy votaries as ministrants at the altar of humanity; and, above all, in his own experience, he had learned what human taste, judgment, and feeling may derive from the wise appropriation of dramatic influences. He knew, as well as his readers, how much he was indebted to an intelligent devotion to them, for the vividness of his pencillings, the fertility of his associations, and the beauty of his imagery. Not in vain did he seek, in Hamlet's musings, "grounds more relative" than popular reading could afford, or turn from the inconsistencies of modern gallantry, which he so admirably delineated, to bestow his fond attention upon the "bright angel" of Verona, and "the gentle lady wedded to the Moor."

Lamb's interest in the drama was too well founded to be periodical, as is generally the case. He shared, indeed, the common destiny, in beholding his youthful visions of theatrical glory fade; the time came to him, as it comes to all, when the mysterious curtain was reduced to its actual quality, and became *bona fide* green baize, and when the dazzling pilasters lost their likeness to "glorified sugar candy;" but the his-

trionic art retained its interest, and the literature of the drama yielded a continued pastime. From the rainy afternoon which the "child Elia" spent in such hope and fear, lest the wayward elements should deprive him of his "first play," to the night when the sleep of the man Elia was disturbed with visions of Old Munden, he sought and found, in the drama, food for his reflective humour and pleasurable occupancy in his weary moods—if such e'er came to him —which may be doubted, since he has not so informed us. Notwithstanding his partiality for theatrical representations, few play-goers entertained a more just idea of their frequent and necessary inadequateness. He recognised the limits of the dramatic art. He realized, beyond the generality of Shakspeare's admirers, the impossibility of realizing, by the most successful performance, our deepest conception of his characters. He knew that the wand of that enchanter dealt with things too deep, not only for speech, but for expression. He was impatient at the common interpretation of Shakspeare's mind. In the stillness of his retired study, the creations of the bard appeared to him, as in an exalted dream. In the attentive perusal of his plays, the delicate touches, the finer shades and the under current of philosophy, were revealed to the mind of Lamb with an impressiveness, of which personification is unsusceptible; and few of his essays are more worthy of his genius than that which embodies his views on this subject. It should be attentively read by all who

habitually honour the minstrel of Avon, without being perfectly aware why the honour is due. It will lead such to new investigations into the mysteries of that wonderful tragic lore, upon which the most gifted men have been proud to offer one useful comment, or advance a single illustrative hint. To the acted and written drama, Lamb assigned an appropriate office; he believed each had its purpose, and that he who would derive the greatest benefit from either, should study them relatively and in conjunction. Such was his own method, and to the steadiness and success with which he pursued it, his writings bear the most interesting testimony. The zest with which he dwells upon his dramatic reminiscences, the delight he takes in living over scenes of this kind,—in recalling, after an interval of years, the enjoyment of a single evening of Liston's or Bensley's acting, indicate the intelligence and warmth of his love of theatrical performances; while his successful efforts in reviving the nearly forgotten dramatic literature of the English stage, and his admirable essays, directly or indirectly devoted to the general subject, evince his application and attachment to it. His talents as a dramatic critic are everywhere visible. There is one feature of our author's devotion to the drama, which is too characteristic of the man, and too intrinsically pleasing, to be unnoticed. He never forgot those who had contributed to his pleasure in this manner. They were not to him the indifferent, unestimated beings they are to the majority of those

who are amused and instructed by their labours. Charles Lamb respected the genius of a splendid tragedian on the same ground that that of a fine sculptor won his admiration. He believed one as heaven-bestowed as the other. He recognised his intellectual or moral obligations to an affecting actor as readily as to a favourite author. He sincerely respected the ideality of the profession, sympathized in the life of toil and comparative isolation it imposes, and felt for the deserving and ambitious who had, by assiduous culture and native energy, risen to its summit only to look forward from that long-sought elevation, to a brief continuance of success, followed by an unhonoured decline, an age of neglect, and the world's oblivion.

One of Lamb's most winning traits is his sincerity. The attractiveness of this beautiful virtue, even in literature, is worthy of observation. It seems to be an ordination of the intellectual world and a blessed one it is to those who cherish faith in a spiritual philosophy—that truth of expression shall alone prove powerfully and permanently effective. It is happy that we are so constituted as to be moved chiefly, if not solely, by voices attuned and awakened by genuine emotion; it is well when foreign aids and the most insinuating of conventional appliances fail to deceive us into admiration of an artificial literary aspirant; it is a glorious distinction of our common nature, that soul-prompted language is the only universally acknowledged eloquence. The mission of

individual genius is to exhibit itself. The advocacy of popular opinions, the illustration of prevailing theories—the literary party-work of the day, may be undertaken by such as are unconscious of any more special and personal calling. But let there be a self-preaching priesthood in the field of letters and of art, to teach the great lesson of human individuality. Let some gifted votaries of literature and philosophy breathe original symphonies, instead of merging their rich tones in the general chorus. Unfortunate is the era when such men are not; and thrice illustrious that in which they abound. The history of the world proves this; and in proportion as an author is sincere, in whatever age, he deserves our respect. We spontaneously honour minds of this order, in whatever form they are encountered. The complacent smile with which douce Davie Deans, in Scott's most beautiful tale, hears himself denominated a *Deanite*, recommends him to our esteem. And when a poet or an essayist is as habitually and earnestly candid as is Elia, we feel and acknowledge his worth, whatever may be the calibre of his genius.

Many and singular are the advantages attendant upon this characteristic. The most obvious is that it brings out the true power—the *proprium ingenium* of the individual. Look at the history of Milton and Dante. They surveyed their immediate social circumstances for a reflection of themselves in vain; and then, in calm confidence, they turned to the mirror-fountain within themselves, and thence evolved

thoughts—unappreciated, indeed, by their cotemporaries—yet in the view of posterity none the less oracular. And such intellectual labourers—however confined and comparatively unimportant the sphere of effort—being absolved from any undue allegiance to merely temporary influences, their productions possess a free and personal stamp. Truth is to literature, what, in the view of the alchymists, the philosopher's stone was to the base metals; it converts all it touches into gold. And, although our author had to do mainly with topics which a superficial reasoner would term trifling, yet his lovely sincerity gives them a character, and sheds upon them a warm and soothing light, more pleasing than weightier themes, less ingenuously treated, can often boast. Being sincere, of course Lamb wrote only from the inspiration of his overflowing spirit; he seems to have penned every line, to have thrown off every essay, *con amore*. He did not require the expedient of the Greek painter, who covered the face of one of his great figures with a mantle, not daring to attempt a portraiture of the intense grief which he represented him as suffering. Lamb endeavoured not to express what he did not feel; he wrote not from necessity of policy, but from enthusiasm, from his own gentle, sweet, yet deep enthusiasm. He had a feeling for the art of writing, and therefore he would not make it the hackneyed, conventional agent it too often is; but ever regarded it as a crystalline mould wherein

he could faithfully present the form, hues, and very spirit of his sentiments and speculations.

A striking and delightful consequence of this literary sincerity is, that it preserves and developes the proper humanity of the author. Literati of this class are utterly devoid of pedantry. In society, and the common business of life, they are as other men, except that a finer sensibility, and more elevated general taste, distinguishes them. In becoming writers, they cease not to be men. Literature is then, indeed, what the English poet would have it,—"an honourable *augmentation*" to our arms; it is not exclusively pursued as if it were life's only good, and a human being's sole aim; but it is applied to as a beautiful accomplishment—a poetical recreation amid less humanizing influences. Thus, instead of serving merely as an arena for the display of selfish ambition, or a cell wherein unsocial and barren devotion may find scope, it is valued chiefly as a means of embodying the unforced impressions of our own natures, for the happiness and improvement of our fellow-creatures. We say that such a view must be taken, by sincere authors, of their vocation, because they cannot but feel that, from the very constitution of their natures, literature is only a part of the great whole of the soul's being—a single form of its development, and one among the thousand offices to which the versatile mind is called.

It is needless to prove, in detail, Lamb's sincerity. It is, perhaps, his most prominent characteristic;

but in tracing out and dwelling upon its influence, we are newly impressed with the truth of Shaftesbury's declaration, that "wisdom is more from the heart than from the head." We have ever remarked that the most delightful and truly sincere writers are the most susceptible, affectionate, and unaffected men. We have felt, that however intellectually endowed, the feelings of such individuals are the true sources of their power. Sympathy we consider one of the primal principles of efficient genius. It is this truth of feeling which enabled Shakspeare to depict so strongly the various stages of passion, and the depth, growth, and gradations of sentiment. In whom does this primitive readiness to sympathize—to enter into all the moods of the soul—continue beyond early life, so often as in men devoted to imaginative objects? How frequently are we struck with the childlike character of artists and poets! It sometimes seems as if, along with childhood's ready sympathy, many of the other characteristics of that epoch were projected into the more mature stages of being. "There is often," says Madame de Staël, "in true genius a sort of awkwardness, similar, in some respects, to the credulity of *sincere* and noble souls."

This readiness to catch impressions—this delicacy and warmth of sympathy which belongs to the sincere school of writers, is inestimable. It is said that a musical amateur traversed the whole of Ireland, and gathered from the peasants the delightful

airs to which Moore's beautiful Irish melodies were afterwards adapted. How much of the charm of those sweet songs is owing to their associations with the native and simple music thus gleaned from voices to which it had traditionally descended? And it is by their sympathy—their sincere and universal interest in humanity, that the sweetest poets, the most renowned dramatists, and such humble gleaners in the field of letters as our quaint essayist, are enabled to write in a manner corresponding with the heaven-attuned, unwritten music of the human heart. Sincerity gives them the means of interpreting for their fellow-beings — not only the lofty subjects which filled the soul of the "blind bard of Paradise," and the broad range of life upon which the observant mind of the poet of human nature was intent, but those lesser and more unique themes which Elia loved to speculate about and humorously illustrate.

There is a unity of design in the essays of Lamb. Disconnected and fugitive as we should deem them at first sight, an attentive perusal reveals, if not a complete theory, yet a definite and pervading spirit which is not devoid of philosophy. After being amused by his humour, interested by his quaintness, and fascinated by his style, there yet remains a more deep impression upon our minds. We feel that he had a specific object as a humorist; or, at least, that the ideas he suggests tend to a particular result. What then was his aim? As an author, what mission does he fulfil? We think Charles

Lamb is to life, what Wordsworth is to nature. The latter points out the field flowers, and the meadow rill, the soul's most primal and simple movements, the mind's most single and unsophisticated tendencies; the former indicates the lesser and scarcely noticed sources of pleasure and annoyance, mirth and reflection, which occur in the beaten track of ordinary life. It was remarked, by an able critic, of the author of the Lyrical Ballads, that, "he may be said to take a personal interest in the universe;" with equal truth Elia may be regarded as taking a personal interest in life. He delighted in designating its every-day, universal, and for that very reason —disregarded experiences. Leaving the delineation of martyrdoms, and the deeper joys of the heart, to more ambitious writers, he preferred to dwell upon the misery of children when left awake in their solitary beds in the dark; to shadow forth the peace-destroying phantom of a "poor relation;" to draw up eloquent bacheloric complaints of the "behaviour of married people;" to describe, in touching terms, the agony of one condemned to hear music "without an ear;" and to lament pathetically the unsocial aspect of a metropolitan Sabbath, and the disturbing, heartless conduct of those who remove old landmarks. He did not sorrow only over minor miseries, but gloried in minor pleasures. To him "Elysian exemptions" from ordinary toil—a sweet morning's nap —a "sympathetic solitude"—an incidental act or emotion of benevolence, and, especially, those dear

"treasures cased in leathern covers," for which he was so thankful that he assures us he could say grace before reading them; these, and such as these, were to Charles Lamb absolute and recognised blessings. He seems to have broke away from the bondage of custom and to have seen all things new. One would think, to note the freshness of his perceptions in regard to the most familiar objects of London, that in manhood he was for the first time initiated into city life—that he was a new comer into the world at an advanced age. Hogarth found no more delight in his street-pencillings, than Lamb in his by-way speculations. In the voyage of life he seemed to be an ordained *cicerone*, directing attention to that lesser world of experience to which the mass of men are insensible,—drawing their attention from far-off visions of good, and oppressive reminiscences of grief, to the lowly green herbage, springing up in their way, and the soft gentle voices breathing at their firesides, and around their daily steps. And there is truth in Elia's philosophy, for,—

> "If rightly trained and bred,
> Humanity is humble,—finds no spot
> Her heaven-guided feet refuse to tread."

We never rise from one of his essays without a feeling of contentment. He leads our thoughts to the actual, available springs of enjoyment. He reconciles us to ourselves; causing home-pleasures, and the charms of the wayside, and the mere comforts of

existence, to emerge from the shadow into which our indifference has cast them, into the light of fond recognition. The flat dull surface of common life, he causes to rise into beautiful *basso-relievo*. In truth, there are few better teachers of gratitude than Lamb. He rejuvenates our worn and weary feelings, revives the dim flame of our enthusiasm, opens our eyes to actual and present good, and with his humorous accents, and unpretending manner, reads us a homily on the folly of desponding, and the wisdom of appreciating the cluster of minor joys which surround and may be made continually to cheer our being.

We have endeavoured to designate the most prominent of Charles Lamb's traits as an essayist. There is, however, one point to which all that we know of the man converges. His literary and personal example tends to one striking lesson, which should not be thoughtlessly received. We allude to his singular and constant devotion to the ideal. Indeed, he is one of those beings who make us deeply and newly feel how much there is within a human spirit,—how independent it may become of extrinsic aids,—how richly it may live to itself. Here is an individual whose existence was, for the most part, spent within the smoky precincts of London; first a schoolboy at a popular institution, then a laborious clerk, and at length a "lean annuitant." Public life, with its various mental incitements,—foreign travel, with its thousand fertilizing associations,—fortune, with the unnumbered objects of taste she

affords,—ministered not to him. Yet with what admirable constancy did he follow out that sense of the beautiful, and the perfect, which he regarded as most essentially himself! How ardently did he cherish an ideal life! When outward influences and domestic restrictions encroached upon this, his great end,—the drama, his favourite authors, a work of art, or a musing hour, were proved restoratives. He did not gratify his fondness for antiquity among the ruins of the ancient world; but the Temple cloisters, or an old folio, were more eloquent to him of the past, than the Coloseum is to the mass of travellers. He knew not the happiness of conjugal affection; but his attachment to a departed object was to him a spring of as deep joy, as the unimaginative often find in an actual passion. No little prattlers came about him at eventide; but dream-children, as lovely as cherubs, solaced his lonely hours. The taste, the love, the very being of Charles Lamb, was ideal. The struggles for power and gain went on around him; but the tumult disturbed not his repose. The votaries of pleasure swept by him with all the insignia of gaiety and fashion; but the dazzle and laugh of the careless throng lured him not aside. He felt it was a blessed privilege to stand beneath the broad heavens, to saunter through the fields, to muse upon the ancient and forgotten, to look into the faces of men, to rove on the wings of fancy, to give scope to the benevolent affections, and especially to evolve from his own breast a light "touching all things with hues of hea-

ven;" in a word, to be himself. And is there not a delight in contemplating such a life beyond that which the annals of noisier and more heartless men inspire? In an age of restless activity, associated effort, and a devotion to temporary ends, is there not an unspeakable charm in the character of a consistent humorist? When we can recall so many instances of the perversion of the poetical temperament in gifted natures, through passion and error, is there not consolation in the serene and continuous gratification with which it blessed Lamb? He has now left, for ever, the haunts accustomed to his presence. No more shall Elia indite quaint reminiscences and humorous descriptions for our pleasure; no more shall his criticism enlighten, his pathos affect, or his aphorisms delight us. But his sweet and generous sympathies, his refined taste for the excellent in letters, his grateful perception of the true good of being, his ideal spirit, dwells latently in every bosom. And all may brighten and radiate it, till life's cold pathway is bright with the sunshine of the soul.

The Historian.

MACAULAY.

THERE is no department of literature which has undergone such changes, in modern times, as history. The term once implied a mere collection of facts, narrated with more or less detail and consistency, to which recourse could be had for precedents and illustrations. Few readers associated history, in its original form, with intellectual enjoyment. Its brilliant episodes and interesting characters were chiefly known through the labours of the poet. Thus, Henry VIII. is what Shakspeare made him; Philip of Spain exists in the intense portraiture of Alfieri; and the misfortunes and beauty of Mary Stuart, were revived with new and lasting attractiveness by the tragedy of Schiller. The more we reflect upon the sources of our permanent historical ideas, the clearer will it appear that fiction and poetry have winnowed the silver wheat from the dusty chaff of the annalist; and that epochs are remembered, on account of some dramatic incident or heroic personage, which, incarnated by genius, has been stamped with reality to the heart. Accordingly, historic literature, in the absolute meaning of the phrase, has

been rather a storehouse of the past, which the dramatist explored for a plot, the orator for an argument, and the antiquarian for the pleasure of research. It has seldom, and only in fragments, proved a living record with near relations to the present and future. A gradual modification has been long evident. As the sympathies of mankind have been awakened by the facilities of intercourse, history has become more of a common ground and suggested unimagined attractions. Her archives have been laid open to throw light upon the philosophy of life, —to elucidate the progressive tendency of society, and to trace the laws of providence. A fresh rule of perspective has been applied, whereby the distant is brought near; and the glow of Christian sentiment has revealed, in more vivid tints, the light and shade once indistinctly mingled. Champollion found a key to the monumental history of Egypt; Niebuhr to the antiquities of Rome; and Cousin delivered lectures that kindled crowds of listening youth, in order to trace a high and vast design in the vicissitudes of nations. But this acute and comprehensive study of the past, while it indicates the advanced humanity and superior intelligence of the age, is not the only cause of the improvement in historical writing. The principle of a division of labour, so effective in political and social economy, has been operative in more abstract vocations. It has tended to classify and subdivide literature and science, and thus render their phases more distinct. We perceive its in-

fluence upon history in the fact that, instead of countries, events and individuals are made the subjects of separate description. By this means, instead of a confused jumble of wars, councils, and successions, we have many central points, around which secondary things are made to revolve; and the principle at work—the question in abeyance—the spirit of the times—are brought out with a relief and proportion, that greatly assists our insight and harmonizes our conclusions. With this view Sismondi wrote his Italian Republics, Ranke his History of the Popes, and D'Aubigne, that of the Reformation. Each of these subjects is interwoven with the destiny of the race; each includes essential relations with the progress of civilization and liberty—both political and religious—but separately considered, and thus detached from the mass of circumstances in which the old chronicles involved them—incalculable facility is afforded the inquirer. The advantage is similar to that obtained by the man of science through nomenclatures and cabinets. An intelligent method, in all vocations, promotes success; but its application to history is comparatively recent, and is yet immature.

Yet another element has contributed to the expansion of the historic art,—and that is the eclectic philosophy of the age, which constantly asserts itself not only directly, but with an instinctive and latent agency. It has fused together not only abstract systems, but national manners, schools of art, and principles of taste; even political antipathies are

reconciled by its alchemy; legitimists and republicans fraternize for some idea more precious to each than their respective opinions on government; and sectarians do not hesitate to evince loyalty to the creed of one denomination, while they worship according to the form of another. The composer attempts to unite the melody of the Italian with the harmony of the German music; the sculptor adopts a subject from the Pagan mythology, and imbues it with the sentiment of the Christian religion; and French styles of dress are grafted on Puritan manners. The influence of this eclectic spirit is discernible in modern history, by its appropriation of other forms of literature to its uses. It imitates every successful attempt to reproduce the past; but there are two experiments, of which it has signally availed itself—very different and yet each effective. If we were called upon to designate the most striking representations, of times and persons long departed, which modern literature affords, prominent among them would be the French memoirs and the Scotch novels—the first as authentic daguerreotypes of personal manners, the second as picturesque delineations of scenes and character. A peculiar charm of Macaulay's history is the judicious transfer of these vital elements to his narrative. The account of Monmouth, for instance, taken together, is as relishing a piece of biography as was ever penned, distinct in outline and magnetic in atmosphere—and yet it is interspersed with the annals of two reigns. The same is true of the brief

but vivid sketch of Argyle. Both these characters have been drawn by Scott; and yet, without the accessories of romance, they stand before us in as touching and more clear a light on the emphatic page of the historian. Dumas has written an exciting novel, in which Charles I. is an actor; but the extraordinary events of that monarch's reign, and especially their relation to his fate, is set before the reader by Macaulay in so lucid a manner, that a pleasure is afforded equal to that inspired by the most thrilling details. There is, indeed, no doubt that truth is more wonderful than fiction, if only conveyed with verisimilitude; but it is comparatively easy to weave imaginative drapery in which to array sterile facts, while to make those facts vital by a process of sympathetic reflection that almost identifies the writer with them, is another and more difficult task. It is the same with the description of Charles II. We have been surfeited with anecdotes of the "merry monarch;" but precisely how he fascinated a people so exacting and grave as the English, into such patient toleration of his levity, was never quite so evident as it is made by the present chronicler, whose account of his playing with his spaniels at early morning in the park, and his chit-chat levees while at his toilet, explain more than volumes of less significant comment. Indeed, Macaulay indicates, with singular impressiveness, how the perfidy of the father was his ruin, and the urbanity of the son his redemption with the people—and, by confining him-

self to those traits which affect the mutual relation of the prince and the nation, elucidates events by character, and character by events—a process which is at once artistic and philosophical.

It will doubtless be objected to his history, that it is not profound. We confess, that in our view, this is one of its decided charms. It is the office of the philosopher to follow truth to its last analysis, and deduce great principles from successive facts. The prime duty of the historian is to narrate. We claim from him authenticity, clearness, and that sympathetic interest in his work that renders it vital. These conditions we deem felicitously realized in the present instance. Yet, without an occasional comment, and some reflective suggestion, a chronicler hardly seems in earnest; and, accordingly, remarks that spontaneously occur are expressed at the appropriate time. They are, however, never forced, but naturally spring from the occasion; and are, with scarce an exception, just, discriminating, and in good taste. Thus, after describing the attempts of Charles and Laud to force the English liturgy on the Scots, it is added—"to this step our country owes her freedom;" and, speaking of the affectation of scientific tastes, at the time of the revival of Baconian philosophy, the writer observes—"It is the universal law, that whatever pursuit, whatever doctrine becomes fashionable, shall lose a portion of that dignity which it had possessed while it was confined to a small, but earnest minority, and was loved for its own sake

alone." In another instance, after enunciating some of the inhumanities of the age of Charles, we are assured that—"the more we examine the history of the past, the more reason we shall find to dissent from those who imagine that our age has been fruitful of new social evils. The truth is, that the evils are, with scarcely an exception, old. That which is new is the intelligence which discerns, and the humanity which remedies them." Elsewhere he speaks of "the implacable hatred of an apostate"—of "the fortitude which is derived from reflection and self-respect;" and expresses the opinion, that "in every age the vilest specimens of humanity are to be found among demagogues." By such natural and sensible observations, scattered here and there, the narrative style is varied, and it appears to us that more elaborate or acute comments would be out of place in a professed historian. It is taken for granted that the reader will philosophize for himself on the facts presented. Vigour of statement—the material for analogy and deduction—is what we mainly ask. After all, the great inferences from history are indirectly suggested. If we follow events closely, they solve every question at last. Hence Macaulay has shed much philosophical light on the period described, without seeming to do so. No writer has more plainly traced the events which gave rise to the two great political parties, or so ably indicated the manner in which their conflicts, triumphs, coalitions and modifications, worked out into an enduring system,

the principles of constitutional government. It is seldom that the same hand can so justly depict two such antagonistic characters as the Puritan and the Cavalier, and demonstrate the utility and desirableness of the elements they respectively contributed to the English state and society. The way, too, in which French supremacy was so long maintained, and the insinuation of her politics and literary tastes —so utterly alien to Saxon manliness—is developed with rare skill; while the comparative natural energy of a government founded on popular recognition, and one sustained by diplomatic intrigue, is finely illustrated by the description of England universally respected under Oliver, and under the Stuarts—"a blank in the map of Europe." In a word, to the philosophic mind, there is ample food in this history, though it may not be served up with the emphasis of Hallam or Guizot.

The great problem to be solved by the English historian is the *rationale* of her civic and religious liberty, and her extraordinary material prosperity; the one having survived the action of causes, many of which operated equally upon Europe, where royal despotism was successfully established, and the other having constantly increased to its present unequalled grandeur, in spite of comparatively limited natural resources. Now, to those who object to Macaulay's history, that it is not sufficiently philosophical, we reply, that he has arranged the facts, and related the story, in so lucid and emphatic a manner, that the

latent and general truths evolve themselves to a reflective mind more impressively than if set forth in an argumentative shape. It is a crowning merit of this work that it is eminently and distinctly suggestive. We cannot fail to see that the consistent and wise opposition of the Commons to a standing army, and their firm grasp of the purse, rendered the kingly prerogatives inadequate for all purposes of selfish aggrandizement and supreme control, such as reduced the continental nations to vassalage. In regard to religious freedom, the long struggle between the Church of Rome and Protestantism, developed under such circumstances in England as to enlighten, in a very experimental and summary way, the whole people, as to the value of the right of private judgment in matters of faith. The war of opinion kindled, indeed, the fires of persecution, but their flames illumined as well as consumed. The whole history of the Test Act, as here unfolded, shows how certain is the reaction of spiritual tyranny. To the obstinacy of James, in attempting to force his creed upon the state, all the religious liberty which England boasted owes its vehement assertion; for the people were strong in the conviction, that, "however fair the general character of a papist might be, there was no excess of fraud or cruelty of which he was not capable when the safety and honour of his church were at stake." To this feeling Macaulay attributes the popular dread of Catholicism; and shows that such men as Locke and Tillotson were justified in their

intolerance, on the same ground; and that to the policy of James, in direct opposition to the general sentiment—"the English Roman Catholics owed three years of lawless and insolent triumph, and a hundred and forty years of subjection and degradation."

In the description of this monarch's reign, Macaulay follows Fox and Mackintosh in all essential materials; but they are vivified and newly fused in the alembic of his earnest mind. Few readers will hesitate to adopt his estimate of James, of the two Hydes, of Rochester and Tyrconnell; and what is a greater tribute to his ability—in few memories will his masterly portraits of these distinguished characters fail to remain—bold in lineament, haunting in expression, and as fresh in colour as if just depicted from the living originals. The same may be said of the more elaborate and carefully laboured portrait of William, Prince of Orange. Indeed, among the most attractive features of the work, are the glimpses afforded of Holland—her local aspect, policy and patriotism. These incidentally appear in the first volume. In the second, the career of William is displayed in a new and interesting light. Nor can we sufficiently admire the felicity of method adopted by the historian, in preserving instructive details without interrupting the continuity of eventful narrative, and filling up, in a separate analysis, the outline of characters only half revealed by action. Such was the case with the Prince William, whose master-pas-

sion, often concealed beneath a natural reserve, is lucidly set forth.

An important and hitherto neglected branch of history is character-writing. It has been the custom of the annalist to recount the deeds of heroes, and leave their traits to be thence inferred by the reader; but the strict analysis, and the metaphysical tests which modern criticism has applied to human genius and action, now give special meaning to history. Indeed, one of its most difficult and interesting phases is the relation of individuals to events, the influence of persons upon circumstances. In the work before us there are several carefully drawn and elaborate portraits; and what is remarkable, they are drawn without any of the extravagance which occasionally diminishes the authenticity, while it heightens the effect of sketches of this kind, that have appeared from the same pen in the reviews. Take, for instance, three totally dissimilar, yet greatly influential characters—each familiar enough by name, and yet in regard to whom a more distinct and just impression is induced by the facts cited and the dispositions unfolded—Halifax, Jeffreys, and William Penn. The former is so admirably characterized as to serve for a beautiful type of enlightened moderation; the wanton cruelty and ferocious passions of the second are detailed with reference to the vindictive spirit of James and the reaction of a persecuted faction, so as to account for the scope allowed them; while the Quaker philanthropist is exhibited in a light that will be new, and, per-

haps heretical, to his prescriptive admirers. That extraordinary chapter in the annals of fanaticism—the career of Titus Oates—is also placed in its just connexion with the political animosities and fierce bigotry of the age; we see his brutal visage amid the crowd that glowered on him around the bar; and this and similar vivid pictures of extreme moral degradation are the more striking, from the contrast they present to those of elegant selfishness and "the smooth barbarity of courts," in the luxury of Clarendon and the fate of Strafford.

There is something essentially dramatic in materials like these; but it is a nice art to use them judiciously. Carlyle's French Revolution is a kind of tragic poem. He sacrifices details and continuity to grand effects. He gives us the horrible realities of the period as if fresh from the dreadful fascination of the spectacle. To combine graphic description with careful statistics, to intersperse impressive delineations of men with the precise narration of public occurrences, is, however, undoubtedly the best manner to write history for the multitude; and this is a distinguishing merit of the present work. But it is in the limning of classes as well as individuals that Macaulay excels. No one can rise from the perusal of this history without a far less vague and more satisfactory idea of the courtier, the soldier, the clergy, and the country gentleman of the day. Their habits, manners, and opinions, are so clearly exhibited, that, instead of being solely occupied with the renowned actors in the drama, as is usually the case,

we see also the florid countenances of her rustic aristocracy, the torn cassock of the country priest, and the rich establishment of the city merchant; thus, as we are hurried along the stream of events, our sympathies fairly enlisted and impatient of the issue, it is not only with the consciousness of a few noble personages, whose fate is at stake—but the shouts and the tramp of a multitude assure us that the people are everywhere around; and the vast problem of their destiny is pressed upon our hearts, with an earnestness that renders the doings of kings and ministers but secondary and incidental. In thus keeping in view the interests and tendencies of all classes, and making obvious their mutual action, Macaulay gives a significance to his record at once explicit and complete.

Another peculiarity is the sagacious use he has made of the testimony of ambassadors. In many instances, he gives us the impression of foreign attachés to the court, both in regard to public measures and characters, and this greatly aids us in coming to a truthful result. He often quotes, with brevity, but judgment, the reports of the two French ministers of Louis, so that we are enabled to form an opinion from the evidence of lookers-on, as well as that of partakers in the game. A striking example occurs, illustrative of the solemn effect, even in a period of noted perjury and corruption, of the administration of justice in England. On the occasion of the acquittal of Delamere, charged with participation in

Monmouth's rebellion, which is described as closing another period of proscription, a letter of Adda, a Papal envoy accustomed to the magnificent pomp of Roman ceremonies, is referred to, as stating that the trial was "una funzione piena di gravità, di ordine, e di gran speciosità." It requires the sagacity inspired by genuine historical taste, thus to converge the light from various and scattered materials—diplomatic, statistical, and literary,—in order to reveal, to the best advantage, the time-obscured, yet noble countenance of truth.

Leaving Macaulay's orthography to the lexicographers, we come to his style, which is constantly referred to, as if it were so individual and prominent a characteristic as wholly to account for his popularity. It is singular, however, that no English writer of our day appears to be more free of artificial rules in the construction of his sentences, less studied in phraseology, and, in a word, more thoroughly spontaneous. His thoughts clothe themselves, as it were, instinctively with the appropriate words. His paragraphs are concise or diffuse according to the subject discussed, and the feelings with which it is treated. The result of a series of events is given with eloquent terseness; a descriptive passage is expanded into successive undulations—each carrying on the idea to a broader development, "till the ninth billow breaks along the shore," in a kind of Spenserian crisis. In statistical announcement, no expression can be more directly to the point than this writer's; in analyzing charac-

ter, his use of adjectives and his definition of qualities are remarkable for being as explicit as words can make them; but where scope is allowable, he gives utterance to an opinion with the utmost vigour, and breathes a sentiment with rare truth and delicacy. Yet there is no conscious artifice in this. It would be absurd to talk of studying Macaulay's style as it was the fashion to do in regard to Addison and Burke. The truth is, it is a perfectly natural, and, therefore, a variable style, above technicality, void of pretence, adapting itself to the theme, occasion or emotion that demands expression, by a kind of genius equally the result of common sense and of inspiration, of a perception of the appropriate, and a perception of the beautiful. An Edinburgh professor, who had long experience in teaching the art of composition, declares that "the secret of using language well is to use it from a full mind." Such, it appears to us, is the explanation of Macaulay's rich and persuasive diction. His mind overflows instead of being drained. The affluence of his information swells the current of his style, the clearness of his ideas renders it transparent, and the energy of his thought gives it impulse. Thus it is what style should ever be, the medium, not the artistic limit of mind—the exponent, not the fancy costume of ideas. His felicitous union of the colloquial and the didactic, the familiar and the dignified in expression, results from the just and delicate adaptation we have noticed. Another marked excellence is great force of statement. There is

never the slightest vagueness either in the terms of a proposition or the summing up of evidence, however general may be the intermediate language. This fixes attention and vividly impresses the memory. He has likewise an aphoristic manner of uttering an important conclusion, that the reader warmed by his rhetoric, seizes upon with avidity. It appears, therefore, that the true merits of his style—spontaneity and adaptation, are quite inimitable; they must spring from within and cannot be grafted without; like courage, honour, generosity, or any other fine moral instinct, they are innate. As to the fascination so generally acknowledged to belong to Macaulay's style, it obviously arises from his fluency, his clearness, and especially his spirit. The latter quality, the same which distinguishes the verse of Campbell from that of Wordsworth, is a universal charm. There is such a thing as writing and talking very sensibly, and yet in a soporific monotone. Macaulay, no matter how far back into the past he may be delving, how arid the details or formal the scenes upon which he may be engaged, is ever awake. There is no languid movement, but a kind of infectious animation that palpitates in every sentence. It is like the conversation of a friend who has an inexhaustible fund of animal spirits. It is emphatically the style of a cultivated Englishman of the nineteenth century—self-possessed, healthy, with reason on the alert, and comfort all around. Strength, equanimity, glibness, and cheery toil are indicated by such a

style. It savours of a well-fortified stomach, well-braced nerves, a determined heart and a clear head. In all this, we mean chiefly to say that Macaulay writes like a man; and that is the reason why men of sense and women of spirit are attracted by his style. There is nothing effeminate, cockneyish, dainty, or far-fetched in it; but an essential and pervading manliness, in striking contrast with much of the literature of the day, which is emasculated by indefiniteness, extravagance, or morbid refinement. We may realize this distinction by the fact, that it not only gratifies our love of knowledge and taste for efficient expression, to read Macaulay, but it does all this without infringing upon self-respect, like the social delights we partake with a noble companion.

It is difficult to select a single passage from a voluminous history to illustrate these characteristics of style. Yet we venture to adopt one at random. Few orders of the Church are better known than the Jesuits; a common adjective of our vernacular is derived from their appellation. In describing the political relations of England and France, it becomes necessary for the author to allude to the coalition between these renowned sectaries and Louis, occasioned by the Port Royal controversy. To place the subject in a clear light, the historian refers to the Jesuits—their merits and crimes, their triumphs and their wrongs. The subject is trite, and yet no reader can feel a moment's impatience, so felicitous is the sketch and so effective its application.

When guided by truth we revert to first principles. It is so in character when, freed from the shackles of worldly pride, we act upon the divine precept, and "become as little children;" it is so in taste, when the casual enchantment of an intense or grotesque style of art is dispelled, and we earnestly resume simplicity and nature as the genuine rule of excellence: it is so in history. The first historians were poets; and the poetical spirit now falls upon the later. A survey of this field of literature, indeed, displays a constant tendency to the artificial, until that wonderful change in thought and expression, ushered in by the volcanic agitations during the last quarter of the last century. The almost inextricable mingling of fact and fable in ancient history, diminishes its authentic value; while the introduction of individual prejudices and the doctrines of faction in modern, frequently causes it to be equally unreliable. It is acknowledged that Gibbon wrote with a preconceived, speculative object. Cold design overlays every page. His work is rather an elegant oration, pronounced with sustained diction, than a living picture of the past. The order into which he reduced an immense quantity of chaotic material is, perhaps, its most striking charm. It has been said of Hume that he first brought philosophy to the elucidation of English history; but, as before intimated, these standard models have been in a great degree superseded by the more natural graces and just insight which the progress and the humanity of the age,

have engendered. It is pre-eminently the distinction of modern genius to have rendered man, as such, the great object of sympathy and interest. Accordingly, details once thought insignificant, phases of life heretofore neglected, and social influences deemed by earlier writers too familiar for the dignity of the historian's pen, are now combined with the record of grave counsels, national wars, and political vicissitudes.

The wisdom of this course is evident from the fact, that we do not actually derive our clearest impression of kingdoms or epochs from history. Plutarch has filled the imagination of the moderns with Roman traits and modes of thought more than Livy. The intellectual character of Germany—its actual moral life—was revealed with far more impressiveness by Madame de Stael's treatise, than by all the annals compiled by the laborious and accurate research of her historical scholars. Old Froissart has continued to attract from the obvious genuineness of his descriptions—the soldier-like directness and picturesque fidelity of his narrative. Who doubts that our most lively ideas of Spain, are gleaned from her dramas, Gil Blas and Don Quixote? These and similar considerations warrant the belief that much of truth and utility, as well as delight, has been sacrificed to what is called the dignity of history. This quality often produces the same results in literature as in manners. It maintains pride at the expense of enjoyment, and surrenders all the advantages of in-

timacy for the sake of grandeur. Hence the spirit of enlightened inquiry is baffled, and the ardour of sympathetic emotion chilled. Our communion with the past becomes quite unsatisfactory, until it is sought through the dramatist, or the letter-writer, who give us veritable glimpses of our race, admit us to their daily experience, and enable us to share their pastimes and their wrongs. Among other great merits of Michelet, is the occasional introduction, in his history of France, of fresh local descriptions, such as might be taken from the note-book of a genial traveller. This is, at least, a living grace, which gives vivacity to the formal account of battles fought centuries ago. We consider Prescott the most unobjectionable representative of that school of history, the ideal of which is correct and tasteful narrative. In other respects, he seems to us vastly overrated. We look in vain for that earnestness of purpose, that high and uncompromising tone of sentiment, that genuine love of humanity, which should distinguish the historian of the nineteenth century. Prescott is a kind of elegant trimmer in literature, such as Macaulay describes in the volume before us, in politics. His popularity is chiefly owing to the fact that he offends no one's taste or prejudices. One of his critics ingeniously defends this secondary renown on the principle of a balance of qualities which, it is declared, is both rare and most desirable in a historian. But readers are no longer satisfied with merely negative merits. The heart and mind of the age de-

mand, and will have, the positive. Form is no longer allowed to atone for spirit, nor taste for truth, nor courtesy for love. At all events, if the light of new principles cannot be given to a narrative, tameness will not be endured. Life has been too often imparted to the musty chronicle by poetry, to allow of its being rewritten without a vital glow. Hence the familiar spirit, the minute details, the graphic portraiture, and the comparison of the past with the present, that gives the air of an animated discussion, the descriptive hue of romance, and the living grace of a tale told by an eye-witness, which characterize the best historical works of the day. In that of Macaulay we have an admirable specimen of this kind. Whatever may be its comparative value, it is conceived with a keen and constant view to the principles we have indicated. It is graphic, methodical, clear, and unites scenic touches, sketches of manners and society, and individual portraits, into one consistent and elaborate picture of the era it chronicles.

How sedulously the author has sought incidental and collateral information, in order to render this picture complete, is evident from the various and recondite sources of knowledge he has so wisely explored. No means to the great end in view seems to have been too humble, no pains-taking too wearisome. He has consulted, besides historical and biographical works, and official documents, the newspapers and the parish-registers of the day. An old sermon yields him one suggestion, an obsolete novel

another. Here a time-stained ballad, and there the confession of a martyr; now a passage from a long-forgotten play, and, again, a couplet from one of Dryden's satires, affords the needful hint. On the same principle no really national feature, although quite apart from political history, is suffered to pass without its explanation. Thus the proverbial excellence of English inns is accounted for by the circumstance that, in early times, they afforded the only resting-place for the traveller, between populous and active districts, and were, therefore, a certain source of profit, and a great social necessity. The distinctness of classes—especially that between rural squires and the city burghers, is explained, on the ground that the locomotive facilities were so limited as effectually to bar frequent intercourse. The origin of the celebrated breed of English horses, and the influences of coffee-houses upon London society, are regarded as worthy of mention, as being part of the history of the country, equally with the execution of Charles I., the fall of Danby, or the court influence of the Duchess of Portsmouth. Female education, the amount of iron manufactured, the state of the roads, the wages of day labourers, the housewifery, amusements, costume, equipages, and municipal regulations—all, in short, characteristic of the period described, is brought clearly before the mind, either in careful statistics or animated sketches, so that we not only have a panoramic, but a picturesque, economical, and dramatic view of the age and people.

The Idealist.

JOHN STERLING.*

THERE is an affecting charm in the incomplete, whether in destiny or character, especially when their elements have been active and intense. As a lyrical effusion will sometimes give us a deeper glimpse into the poet's heart than a finished epic, so the desultory and casual overflowings of a mind striving for harmony, the suggestive eloquence which gives the idea of a latent world of unexpressed emotion, awakens both imagination and sympathy far more than utterances comparatively full and satisfactory.

To possess at once keen insight and imperative sympathies, is to be liable to extreme mental suffering, for which we can imagine no consolation but a high and serene faith. The ability to discern things in their actual relations, to pierce the rind of the conventional and draw near the heart of nature, may be enjoyed merely as a scientific pastime; but when

* 1. Essays and Tales by John Sterling, collected and edited, with a memoir of his life. By Charles Julius Hare, M. A. London. J. W. Parker. 1848.

2. The Poetical Works of John Sterling. First American edition. Philadelphia: Herman Hooker. 1842.

"the strong necessity of loving" is united to such clear perceptions, the mind and the heart are exposed to severe and incessant conflict; and to reconcile them is the grand problem of life. This appears to have been the case with Sterling. He had the intense desire for truth which belongs to the philosopher, and the enthusiasm and sense of beauty which characterize the poet. To gratify these dominant impulses, and at the same time, be loyal to the duties of his position and true to himself, was what he constantly sought to do, in the face of physical weakness and pain, and ever-recurring monitions of death. The free thought, the patient will and the loving heart, wrought not always together, but sometimes adversely; and, only at intervals, came the balm of content and the blessedness of tranquillity. Hence in broken tones and by lapses he obtained utterance. No shapely and complete temple rose beneath the hand whose nerves disease had unstrung; and hints instead of revelations are bequeathed by a mind seldom allowed to work continuously. It is precisely in such a result, however, that we see the effect of the severance between thought and action, which is so impressive a sign of the times. The warrior's thought, in earlier days, only heralded his attack; the scholar's meditation armed him for controversy which influenced the fate of nations; and the minstrel, equally adroit with sword and pen, struck his harp in the intervals between embassies. There are now countless eminent thinkers, who must be content to cast a waif

upon the rushing stream of opinion and see it carried down the tide of oblivion; exhaust their energy both of purpose and sentiment, in vain longings and speculative reverie; and live, like Sterling—"not arrived at clear satisfaction, yet stirred by the prompting consciousness that there is a higher aim of being than the outward world, or our sense and passion can furnish."

It is chiefly as a type of this class of men, singularly prevalent in this age, that Sterling deserves attention. The record of his views, aims, and sentiments, his acquisitions and aspirations, contained in verse, essay, tale and letter, admit the thoughtful reader to a consciousness of his life—and that life, in its fragmentary issues, its alternations of labour and despondency, its moods of criticism and enthusiasm, hope and apathy, has in it a blended glory and wo, promise and failure, sadness and brilliancy, which although analogous to human life in general, involves, as it seems to us, a phase characteristic of the times, and one which has attracted but slightly the consideration it deserves.

We allude to the fact that while greater scope than ever before is now afforded talent, and unequalled opportunities for knowledge exist, earnestness of purpose seems to find no heritage or goal. In bygone days, there was ever a cause dear enough to absorb all the energies of grave and ardent natures, a line of policy for the statesman leading to magnificent results; a special truth for the divine, the

maintenance of which happily penetrated and overflowed his being;—a crusade for the soldier holy enough to sanction and consecrate his adventurous will and elicit his unswerving courage. Energy of thought or feeling, instead of being diffused and "perplexed in the extreme," as now,—found instant, tangible, and efficient vent. Life was direct, individual, absolute. Its daily tasks involved a great desire. Priests, warriors, and poets, did not enact their vocations by mechanical routine, but with faith and zeal—as those to whom they imported much. Instead of speculating about life, they lived; instead of criticising, they created; instead of "letting I dare not wait upon I would"—they either realized desire through action, or turned from it with the self-sacrifice of faith. They dallied, questioned, theorized, dissected not; but found some reality either of belief or enterprise to embrace, cling to and pursue—thus giving unity and meaning to existence.

Cut off by physical feebleness from extensive research, Sterling sought truth by the process suggested by Swedenborg—the maintenance of a recipient state through self-oblivion. He calmly accepted the idea so eloquently urged by Coleridge, that "faith is the highest reason;" and in his literary studies, was indebted to him for the invaluable conviction that all criticism is blind which discerns not the "organic unity of an object." A "mood of tranquil sympathy," was his ideal of happiness. "His mind,"

says his biographer, "was reflective and speculative rather than intuitive and productive."

Mr. Hare evidently struggles between his affection for his friend and his conscientiousness as a priest, in recording the change in Sterling's views. To us, however, it is evident that the conservative discipline and spiritual inertness of the established church, were quite inimical to the progressive and earnest spirit of Sterling. Early associations, a sense of duty and a natural love of the consistent and the habitual, rather than absolute conviction, seems to have allied him to its doctrine and forms. The truth is, his nature was of that description which a creed oppresses. He belonged to the order of men of whom Wordsworth speaks in his ode to Duty, who "do God's will and knows it not." The more he read metaphysics and theology, the less, it seems to us, did he realize the equanimity he sought. The more he argued the less was he convinced. But when, with the childlike truthfulness of the poet, he yielded himself to the influences of nature; when under the unchecked influence of sentiment—whether love or veneration—a holy calm seems to have brooded over his soul. Only then did he write genially. There is a painful overlaying of unconscious and sweet impulse, in his verse, by will, reasoning and a definite moral system. Hence a certain stiffness which is repulsive. Yet as the formality of a Puritan often covered ardent heroism—one can ever see a cordial gleam from the eye of Sterling, the man, through

the spectacles of his scholarship, and hear a human heart beat under the frosty surplice of the priest. It was this quality of earnestness which attracted Sterling to German literature, and rendered its study an epoch in his life. Although in his admirable paper on the subject, he attributes its peculiar excellencies to the "seats of free thought," as he calls the German universities, it is because there, in his opinion, may be found "the greater part of earnest meditation extant on earth."

Sterling never won the palm of English scholarship. His ill health prevented the incessant application requisite for great classical acquirements; but independent of this, he was like Montaigne, more inclined to "forge his mind than to furnish it." No error is more common than to estimate mental power by the extent and retentiveness of the memory. It is one of those popular fallacies which the self-interest of mediocre intellects ever inculcates, on the same principle that characters of narrow moral resources exaggerate the utility of mere belief, and give precedence to the letter over the spirit of the law. Erudition, however, can never take the place of talent, or any amount of formal ideas yield the vitality which results only from native intuitions. Sterling's early teacher acknowledges that he caught the spirit of a classical author with singular quickness and truth, and often reproduced in his own language, the essence of the myth or character, whose philological details alone his classmates laboriously

unfolded. At school, also, his love of fine rhetoric evinced itself in great sensibility to effective combinations of language and a fondness for "sonorous words."

Sterling's paternal ancestry were Irish—which accounts for the ardent element of his nature. He was born at Kames Castle, Isle of Bute, July 20th, 1806; and four years after, was removed to Glamorganshire, to the romantic scenery of which county he ascribed some of the most lasting impressions of his childhood. His early tuition was strictly private, on account of his delicate health. In 1833 he published a novel; and during the following year, having completed his theological studies, he was ordained deacon, at Chichester, by his former teacher, constant friend, and subsequent biographer. In a few months, however, repeated attacks of pulmonary disease, obliged him to withdraw from professional duty, in which he had been singularly faithful. Thenceforth his life seems to have been divided between books and journeys;—experiments to ward off illness, and unremitting efforts to do good, enlarge the scope of his mental vision and achieve new discoveries in the realm of truth. Athough thus baffled by circumstances, he deemed himself only a "looker on" in the struggle of life,—there were inklings of adventure and occasions for philanthropic enterprise even for the studious invalid. His courageous and self-sacrificing activity at a college fire, early marked him for a man of benevolent impulse; he was a cor-

dial ally of the Spanish refugees, and crossed the Channel in a fishing-boat, with General Torrijos, afterwards executed at Malaga. In the West Indies, his house was blown down by a hurricane. He there interested himself in the education of the slaves; and subsequently visited the south of France and Italy; developing, wherever he sojourned, the same keen sense of the evils of society, the same spirit of knowledge—the same clearness of understanding and earnestness of feeling. He died in 1843, having survived his wife but a few months; and the close of his own life was tranquil. He passed away with mental energies unimpaired, gentle affections vivid, and a calm faith in the benignity of his Creator.

His writings reflect a nature subject to the complex and antagonistic influences to which we have alluded. The ultimate impression they leave is a melancholy one; for even the tragic consummation of a great hope, or the tardy realization of a prevailing idea, leaves a certain feeling of satisfaction. The sad phase of the richest natures in our day is their fragmentary and indeterminate destiny. As we muse of their career, our sympathies are painfully excited by the "strife of duties"—that forbids the concentration of their impulses and acts, and breaks up emotion, thought, and energy, into inadequate results. But the imperfections of a career are in such cases, best atoned for by social triumphs and felicity. In direct contact with other minds, in glad fellowship with kindred spirits, in the mental attri-

tion of liberal society, a crude destiny may be in a great measure retrieved. Thus was it with Sterling. He numbered among his intimate friends the choicest men of his country. By those admitted to his confidence he was deeply loved. His companionship quickened, solaced, and cheered; and he had the "faculty of eliciting dormant powers in those with whom he was brought in contact." Although his pen traced no immortal inscriptions, he held, while living, the divining rod which indicated unerringly the mines of intellectual wealth in others, and brought the ore of genius and the hidden springs of character brightly to the surface. This effective social ministry—both in regard to utility and enjoyment, amply compensated for the limited influence he exerted through the press. He fulfilled the high vocation of a friend in the best significance of the term; and nature's holy gifts consecrated him to a wider service than the church.

His mind was appreciating rather than productive. He excelled in mental portraiture; and identified himself through sympathy with literary and heroic characters, so as to designate their traits with precision and fulness. This is evident in the series of papers entitled "Shades of the Dead;" there are fine and thoughtful touches especially in the sketches of Alexander, Columbus, and Jean d'Arc; while the power of more elaborate characterization is well developed in the essays on Montaigne and Carlyle—writers as diverse in spirit and aim as can readily

be conceived, and yet brought home with equal facility, if not to the sympathies, at least to the perception of Sterling.

His diction is concise and rhetorical and is marked by philosophical definiteness, so that we are sometimes let into the essential point of a subject by a single felicitous phrase. Thus he says of Montaigne, that he "delighted in all kinds of distinct human realities;" of Carlyle, that he "loves the ideal realized in things and persons, not expounded in systematic thought;" and aptly describes his style, "not so much a figured as an embossed one." Dr. Johnson he declares "something between the parish schoolmaster and the Great Mogul;" and admirably describes Jean Paul's genius as shrinking "with fastidious and self-complacent vivacity from all the forms, blazonries, and authorities of social existence, when these happen to be insufficiently supported by the worth of the men whom nature's habitual irony has thus dignified."

In metaphor he often evinces the poetical instinct. Thus speaking of relative excellence, he says—"the iris in the dew-drop is just as true and perfect an iris, as the bow that measures the heavens, and betokens the safety of a world from deluge:" elsewhere speaks of "the artificial parasol of self-conceit" as substituted for the infinite concave of heaven; and compares a poor child's funeral in a gay street in London, to "a wounded raven fluttering through the chamber of a king."

In accordance with these characteristics, the poetry of Sterling has more grave philosophy than lyric fire. His muse is aphoristic rather than melodious. The calm wisdom of Wordsworth, and the metaphysical intelligence of Coleridge reappear in his verse. It contains, however, striking rhetorical beauties. In expression, he often blends precision of idea with force of language, so as to produce rare verbal felicity. Thus in the longest of his poems, "The Sexton's Daughter," though many of the stanzas are commonplace, the effect of the whole is singularly pathetic, and it leaves a sweetly melancholy impression on the reader's mind, like a strain of elegiac music. His description of the three principal characters, afford a fair example both of the manner and significance of the composition:

THE SEXTON.

Sad seemed the strong, gray-headed man,
Of lagging thought and careful heed;
He shaped his life by rule and span,
And hoarded all beyond his need.

JANE.

Thus from within and from without,
She grew, a flower of mind and eye;
'Twas love that circled her about,
And love in her made quick reply.

Church, too, and churchyard were to Jane
A realm of dream, and sight, and lore;
And, but for one green field or twain,
All else a sea without a shore.

Of this her isle the central rock
Stood up in that old tower sublime,
Which uttered from its wondrous clock
The only thought she had of time.

Withdrawn was she from passing eyes
By more than Fortune's outward law,
By bashful thoughts and silent sighs,
By Feeling's lone retiring awe.

HENRY.

For far unlike was Henry's mind
To aught that Jane had seen before;
Though poor and lowly, yet refined
With much of noblest lore.

A gentle widow's only child
He grew beneath a loving rule;
A man with spirit undefiled,
He taught the village school.

And many books had Henry read,
And other tongues than ours he knew,
His heart with many fancies fed,
Which oft from hidden wells he drew.

What souls heroic dared and bore
In ancient days for love and duty,
What sages could by thought explore,
What poets sang of beauty.

With these he dwelt, because within,
His breast was full of silent fire.
No praise of men he cared to win,
More high was his desire.

Thus Henry lived in meek repose,
Though suffering oft the body's pain,

Though sometimes aimless thoughts and woes
Like wrestling giants racked the brain.

Her looks like summer lightning spread,
And filled the boundless heavenly deep;
Devoutest peace around she shed,
The calm without the trance of sleep.

And so she freshened all his life,
As does a sparkling mountain rill,
That plays with scarce a show of strife
Around its green, aspiring hill.

We lack space to designate the many beautiful touches which give effect to this simple rhythmical tale. Sterling has thrown around it the charm of a pensive imagination, unexaggerated and natural. He sincerely recognised the principle of his favourite Carlyle, that—"Reverence is the condition of insight." His ideal of love is elevated—uniting the human and religious:

And man will ask below the skies
That breast may lean to beating breast,
That mingling hands and answering eyes
May halve the toil and glad the rest.

Yet could he temper love and meekness
With all the sacred might of law,
Dissevering gentleness from weakness,
And hallowing tenderness by awe.

"Aphrodite" exhales a classical spirit and has many fine images. As a poem it offers a rich contrast to the "Sexton's Daughter"—and is radiant with the atmosphere of the goddess, by whom

——— As tale and history tell,
And sculptured marble gray,
And oracle and festal rite
Surviving man's decay;
By whom all things are beautiful,
And peaceable and strong,
And joy from every throe is born,
And mercy conquers wrong.

The "Hymns of a Hermit" are pervaded by a truly devout spirit, a confidence in truth, and a sublime hope. The language is concise and appropriate, and some memorable lines occur. "Otho III.," "Louis XV.," and "Alfred the Harper," are highly suggestive historical anecdotes, reproduced in eloquent and picturesque verse. But perhaps the most striking and characteristic of Sterling's minor poems, is that entitled "Abelard to Heloise." Although ostensibly the embodiment of another's feeling, it has an earnest clearness—a deep undertone and terse beauty which mark it as the offspring of individual emotion. It is a genuine sibylline leaf torn warm from the heart of an impassioned, yet noble and just being, which appeals to the fondest records of experience.

Such life-dramas, as that of Sterling, have an immortal type in Hamlet. We recognise in the souls whose developments we thus trace—as in the character of the musing prince—reflective powers, both acute and profound, a world of sensibility, impassioned affections, delicate moral feeling—all the noblest elements of humanity, yet so balanced and

opposed as to find no healthful and complete external manifestation. Hence the internal conflict, the aspirations and doubts, the magnificent conceptions and ardent longings which find vague utterance perhaps, but "lose the name of action." An existence like this, is more common to this than any preceding age; and its record is, as before suggested, like a problem but half solved. In a word, the restlessness which accompanies the *unattained*, robs it of perfect harmony. The want of a nucleus only seems to prevent a splendid crystallization. Struggle is the most obvious law, and regret the most evident fruit of powers which needed but definite scope, aim, and motive to leave enduring and valuable fruits. With variety of knowledge, there are no grand and satisfactory principles; with intense thought there comes forth no sustaining belief; with quick and ardent affection, there is no lasting, adequate and reciprocated love. Social claims and personal individuality, taste and necessity, duty and love, by perpetual conflict, restrain the efficiency of the man. He is a looker-on, where he would fain be an actor; he dreams, hopes and reasons in a perpetual circle; reveals himself by glimpses, and, haunted by a sense of lofty purposes,—with a mind craving new and vast truth, and a heart parched with an infinite thirst for sympathy — instead of adventure, pilgrimage, warfare, or original intellectual creation — those moulds in which the glowing spirits of past ages cast the lava of enthusiasm—a morbid self-inspection, a

melancholy prying into consciousness—an oppressive sense of the responsibility and the mysteries of life, make the gifted of this century too often but modified reproductions of Childe Harold — which, notwithstanding the repudiation of critics, is most emphatically the illustrative epic of the age. Sterling was, indeed, guiltless of ungrateful misanthropy; and his pious sentiments were a bar to reckless despair; but when we trace the evidences in these volumes of intense mental activity, a fearless spirit of inquiry, a singularly candid and affectionate disposition, and the comparatively meagre result—we cannot but feel that this self-dissatisfaction was inevitable.

Want of scope is, indeed, the complaint of the most gifted of the present day. They leave memorials of what they were capable of, instead of eternal deeds and writings. Achievement seems to have become visionary, conquest a speculative event, and martyrdom a domestic process. Shelley in his Letters from an Italian hermitage, and Lamartine in his Palestine Journal, breathe the same consciousness of baffled will and perplexed endeavour. Indeed, how few men, like Schiller, unite genius and character, power regulated by wisdom, and writings moulded from the soul's life, yet shaped into forms of enduring beauty, by patience, taste and rectitude!

The Rhetorician.

BURKE.

To the cotemporaries of a great statesman it is of vital moment to decide whether his opinions agree with each other and if his course is loyal. But to the reader of a future day, his writings are chiefly attractive for the truth they contain and the resources of thought and style they exhibit. No public character escapes animadversion, for if there is nothing in actions which party hatred can execrate, there is always room enough for base surmise in regard to motives. Happily the graces of composition, the pleadings of humanity, the serene effulgence of wisdom, survive such transient and local warfare. True eloquence, like poetry, is hallowed by enduring admiration; and as we attach an inestimable value to a portrait by Titian, although the very name of the original has perished, so the warm and exquisite hues of noble fancy and the effective light and shade of ardent thought, continue sacred long after the questions upon which they were expended have been forgotten, and the temporary ends they subserved have ceased to obtain. Depth and clearness of reflection and beauty of style

are the grand preservatives of the rhetorician's labours. They even render classic the subject to which they are devoted. In the Forum at Rome, we think of Cicero's invectives against Catiline; in the American Senate Chamber, of Webster's defence of the Union; and in Westminster Hall, of Sheridan's speech at the trial of Hastings. To illustrate the sources of rhetorical power, there is no more felicitous example than Edmund Burke. His life was remarkably transparent, unobscured by mystery and unembarrassed by violent contradictions. We clearly descry his image and easily trace his career. The means and appliances that promoted his development were in no degree extraordinary; they are within the reach of thousands. His habits were simple, his purposes undisguised, and the nature and extent of his cultivation amply revealed in his writings. His outward experience was comparatively uneventful. Of Irish descent, his youth is associated with a residence near the ruins of Spenser's dwelling—where much of the Fairy Queen was written,—with the salutary discipline of a Quaker school and the usual college instruction. Like most boys of intellectual tendency, his health was not robust and he dallied with the muses. By the former contingency he was rendered more impressible to the influences of nature, and by the latter experiment his taste for beautiful expression was revealed.

When his academical education was completed, like most young men of active intelligence, he vacil-

lated awhile between several projects. He applied for a Scotch professorship and meditated emigration to America. Meantime pursuing his law-studies in London, he increased his father's yearly allowance of two hundred pounds, by contributing to the periodicals of the day—a habit which gave him variety of practice in the art of expression. Occasional journeys for needful recreation, miscellaneous and unremitting reading, professional study, attentive visits to the House of Commons and the theatre, and social enjoyment of the best kind, quickened his powers and informed his mind. He contracted a happy marriage with the daughter of his benign physician, and thenceforth domestic life was the balm of his spirit. His philosophical taste and love of beauty found scope in the "Enquiry into the Sublime and Beautiful;" and the historical article which he regularly furnished the Annual Register, afforded the most desirable initiation possible into national affairs and political questions. Assimilating these various influences, practical and contemplative, he was unconsciously trained for the career of the rhetorician. From nature, books, the courts, Parliament, the drama and society, he constantly gleaned ideas; the amenities of a united family softened the intensity of reflection, and the habitual use of the pen on comprehensive topics as well as oral discussions with the superior men of the day, gave new facility to that power of language with which he was endowed by nature. That he re-

cognised this general and accurate knowledge of men and things, and an acquired felicity of utterance as the requisites of his vocation, may be inferred from the opinion he gives Barry, the painter, in regard to the old masters, — which is equally applicable to verbal expression. "If I were to indulge in a conjecture, I should attribute all that we call greatness of style and manner of drawing, to the exact knowledge of anatomy and perspective. For by knowing exactly and habitually, without the labour of particular and occasional thinking, what was to be done in every figure they designed, they naturally attained a freedom and spirit of outline, because they could be daring without being absurd: whereas ignorance, if it be cautious, is poor and timid; and if bold, it is only blindly presumptuous."

It is essential to a great rhetorician that he should be endowed not only with quickness and discernment, and capacity to retain and assimilate facts and principles, but that a basis of strong natural sense should underlie both his acquisitions and facilities. Otherwise he degenerates into a mere special pleader; his arguments are ingenious rather than profound, and his view of any subject liable to be more acute and visionary, than true and comprehensive. It is this justness of perception, this original clearness of insight which the word judgment best though vaguely indicates, that leads to an habitual reference to first principles, to confidence in primary truth, and to a calm and earnest reliance on inductive wisdom. It

was to a remarkable degree the characteristic of Burke. He seems to have been a conservative in the best signification of the term—without bigotry or fanaticism, yet with singular tranquillity of conviction and liberality of feeling. He joined, indeed, the dignity of the conservative to the generous spirit of the reformer. He was a zealous advocate for progress, but for progress in a certain direction and under established influences. In the spirit of our great revolutionary orator, he seemed ever ready to exclaim, "I have but one lamp by which my feet are guided, and that is the lamp of experience; I know of no way of judging of the future but by the past:" thus Patrick Henry opened the celebrated speech in which he so eloquently advocated resistance to Great Britain, boldly suggesting the greatest of national innovations by an appeal to the unsatisfactory result of patient endurance. It was not a familiar precedent, however, but a great principle that justified his cause. Thus Burke in his writings on France and America manifests the liveliest attachment to existent institutions and a faith in them as the result of ages of human conflict and thought, but it is on the fundamental principles involved in them and on the natural instincts whence they spring, that he relies. It appears to us that the great elements of Burke's rhetoric may all be traced to this philosophic habitude. He never lost sight of the facts of human nature and human life—of the everlasting laws by which they are regulated. The phenomena,

however imposing or winsome, never drew him from the law, the form from the substance, the transient phase from the original element. Hence his deep aversion to the substitution of theoretical for practical intelligence, his recoil from all attempts to regulate actual society by metaphysical opinions, to let a doctrine take the place of a sentiment, or a visionary speculation of a long-tried expedient. It was this view that led him to perceive so distinctly the error of American taxation and the inapplicability of French philosophy to human well-being. It rendered him sagacious, because it carried him below the surface of things to the mind and heart of man, as developed within to his consciousness, around to his observation, and in history to his reflection. Hence, also, his remarkable prescience. He was a good prophet in national affairs, on the very same ground that Shakspeare is the most effective of dramatists—a constant recurrence to the natural, and therefore the inevitable, springs of human action. Thus he asks, in his "Reflections on the Revolution in France," "Why do I feel so differently from the Rev. Dr. Price, and those of his lay flock, who will choose to adopt the sentiments of his discourse? For this plain reason — because it is *natural* I should; because we are so made as to be affected," &c. The same idea in another guise, reappears in all the arguments and expressions of this celebrated essay; for instance, "We shall never be such fools as to call in an enemy to the substance of any sys-

tem to remove its corruptions, to supply its defects, or to perfect its construction." One of his brief phrases strikingly exhibits how completely he identified reasonable obedience to the instincts and sentiments of human nature, with civilization, and how destructive he deemed all experiments not based upon their primitive teaching. "Nor as yet," he says, in allusion to the philosophical atrocities then enacting in Paris—"have we *subtilized ourselves into savages.*" His first published work of celebrity—the Treatise on the Sublime and Beautiful, is the best evidence of the reverence and curiosity with which he looked into nature for essential truth. In this composition he did so as a mental philosopher; in his after public career, he adopted the same method as the only legitimate test of justice and utility.

He wished to "move with the order of the universe." "I have endeavoured," he says, "through my whole life, to make myself acquainted with human nature; otherwise I should be unfit to take even my humble part in the service of mankind." And again, "wise men will apply their remedies to vices not to names; to the causes of evil which are permanent, not to the occasional organs by which they act, and the transitory modes in which they appear." But it is needless to multiply instances. In dwelling upon this invariable deference to the first principles of our common nature—to the great and unalterable facts of humanity, as the philosophic

element of Burke's character, we desire to suggest the process of his efficiency, to show that no vague and chance aptitude, to which under the name of genius the indiscriminate refer all mental results, is necessary to account for his power. He proceeded in discussing a public question exactly as in a scientific analysis; he brought the same recognition of facts, the same lucid arrangement and rigid induction to his commentary on the French Revolution as to the problem of the Sublime and Beautiful. In both cases it was what God had written on the mind and implanted in the heart of man that he strove to descry, and according to which he argued and inferred. We do not say that therefore his conclusions were infallible, but to this comprehensive yet searching method, we confidently ascribe the wisdom that men of all parties find in the writings of Burke. We believe it is thus only that any perennial light is shed on momentous themes. The view thus eliminated may be incomplete, it may be partial, but as far as it goes, it is a genuine and distinct revelation and an infinite help towards universal truth. It gives a certain grandeur to statesmen, historians, and poets, to apply essential principles to immediate occurrences, try the elements of the hour in the crucible of the past, and, undisturbed by the noise and smoke of the conflict around, calmly guide their steps by patient and trusting observation of the eternal stars. This lofty habitude cramped Burke, except in great questions, as a parliamentary orator. He was obliged

sometimes to begin with a coaxing appeal or startling expression to win the requisite attention. His style of thinking was eminently adapted to contemplative minds. The superficial were impatient at its depth. Burke excelled in furnishing reasons, so clearly expressed and so justly deduced as to fascinate by their bright and orderly array, if they did not overwhelm by their intrinsic power.

There is a permanency attached to views thus based upon long experience and drawn from the primal facts of man and nature, that prolongs their interest and value. However inadequate they may be as representing all the ideas involved in political and social science, no reflective mind can fail to perceive that they have essential meaning; and will, therefore, be continually reproduced. Two revolutions have occurred in France since Burke's celebrated Reflections appeared. The last publication of note relative to the duty and prospects of that country, is a pamphlet by Guizot.* We are struck with the coincidences of thought, the identity of argument of these two treatises—written at such intervals of time and at such different stages of human progress. "I confess to you, sir," says Burke, "I never liked this continual talk of resistance and revolution, or the practice of making the extreme medicine of the constitution its daily bread." "A society may be tortured, perhaps destroyed,"

* Democracy in France.

says Guizot; "but you cannot make it assume a form or mode of existence foreign to its nature, either by disregarding the essential elements of which it is constituted, or by doing violence to them." "Had fate reserved him to our times," says Burke, alluding to the tyranny of Henry VIII., "four technical terms would have done his business and saved him all this trouble,—he needed nothing more than one short form of incantation—Philosophy, Light, Liberty, the Rights of Man." "Nothing," says Guizot, "has a more certain tendency to ruin a people than a habit of accepting words and appearances as realities. While the shouts of unity and fraternity resound among us, they are responded to by social war," &c. A train of reasoning in favour of distinct orders and an established church runs through the two works, and a kindred appeal to innate human affections and moral responsibility. It is probable that the terms of science and the imagery of literature will perpetually vary with new discoveries and the advance of social refinement; but there is an identity in human nature, in its laws, wants, endowments, and tendencies that renders just inferences from them, especially when made with perspicuity and elegance of style, interesting to the thinker of every age. Hence the renown of Burke as a philosophical essayist on government and society.

The next source of his rhetorical gifts was various and precise knowledge. In early life his reading was desultory but incessant. He seems to have in-

tuitively known the applicability of all truth to human culture; for while he perused, with zest, history as the storehouse of the past, he equally cultivated poetry as quickening to the sympathies and suggestive of the beautiful. His observation had the same range. He noted a mill not less than a minster—the one taught him a principle in mechanics and the other in architectural beauty. He recorded the statistics and delighted in the practice of agriculture, while, with kindred intelligence, he made a taste for the fine arts a careful study. It was the same, too, in conversation. No one he encountered failed to contribute to his stock of ideas. He could discuss a portrait with Sir Joshua, a question in philology with Johnson, an elocutionary point with Garrick, manures with a farmer, and costume with a lady. Thus despising no source of information, continually storing his mind with every kind of facts, natural, historical, and social, when he meditated upon a topic, illustrations rushed from his memory, and were readily marshalled to sustain an argument, or combined by his glowing fancy into brilliant and striking metaphors. It was from this exuberance and variety of knowledge, that his fluency as an orator, in part, arose, as well as the spontaneous richness of his conversation; and that immediate recognition of his superiority which led the surly lexicographer to say that, encountered under a shed in the rain, he would be known at once as an extraordinary man. The quickness, indeed, with

which he appropriated facts is evinced in his speeches and writings on France, America, and India. One who had dwelt long in those countries could scarcely speak of them with a more graceful familiarity. He explored not only the data but the associations of every subject; and his acquisitions came forth with a fulness and alacrity that rendered them doubly impressive. He had an emphatic manner of introducing incidental pictures which vivified all the facts previously cited—as in the memorable allusion to the unfortunate Queen of France, the description of Miss M'Crea's murder, and of the New England whale fishery.

Comparison is one of the most effective rhetorical weapons, though rarely encountered in perfection. A striking metaphor arrests the uncultivated mind, while a beautiful one gratifies the refined taste. Burke excelled in both. His images indicate sometimes peculiar ingenuity and sometimes a poetical imagination. They are invariably effective, and add greatly to the living charm of his oratory. Open at any page, and we meet them. Let us quote at random. "After all," he says in a letter, "a man will make more by the figures of arithmetic than the figures of rhetoric, unless he can get into the trade-winds, and then he may sail secure over Pactolean sands." In a speech, referring to the apathetic condition of the Spanish monarchy, "What can we expect of her?" he asks, "mighty, indeed, but unwieldy, vast in bulk but inert in spirit

—a whale stranded upon the sea-shore of Europe." His description of Chatham's administration is felicitous in another vein: "A cabinet so variously inlaid, such a piece of diversified mosaic, such a tessellated pavement without cement—here a bit of black stone and there a bit of white—patriots and courtiers, kings, friends, and republicans, whigs and tories," &c. In relation to the English clubs of French sympathizers, he says: "Do not imagine that our contemptuous neglect of their abilities is a general mark of acquiescence in their opinions. No such thing, I assure you. Because half-a-dozen grasshoppers, under a fern, make the field ring with their importunate clink, while thousands of great cattle, reposing beneath the shadow of the British oak, chew the cud and are silent, pray do not imagine that those who make the noise are the only inhabitants of the field, that, of course, they are many in number, or that, after all, they are other than the little, shrivelled, meagre, hopping, though loud and troublesome insects of the hour." The withering sarcasm of this figure is only equalled by that of Sydney Smith, who said, speaking of an insignificant but mischievous person, that—"in a country intersected by dikes a rat may inundate a province." But the significance and brilliancy of a metaphor is diminished by gleaning it from the context; and this is especially true in regard to those of Burke. The mind is warmed for their reception by previous argument or appeal; and they often rise in majestic beauty from

the tide of his glowing rhetoric, like Aphrodite from the sea.

We have spoken of the mental and verbal characteristics of Burke, but to form an adequate idea of the man or even of his rhetoric, it is indispensable to consider his physical temperament and his moral nature. The former was of that sanguine, nervous kind, both active and susceptible, which gives force and vivacity to expression. Indeed, we ascribe Burke's pre-eminence, in no small degree, to the happy blending in his constitution of English and Irish traits—the one imparting vigour of thought and the other tenderness and enthusiasm. He has been called "a terrific accuser;" but combativeness is essential to an effective rhetorician. Its excitement, when the case justifies, is absolutely necessary in the attack and defence of opinion, in the arraignment of the guilty and the vindication of the injured; but not less desirable is its latent influence—giving a certain firmness, precision, and energy both to ideas and style. We see its bracing effect in all Burke's elaborate efforts. There is an aim in each, of which he never loses sight and toward which every flight of fancy, and ebullition of satire, and pathos of appeal is ardently directed. Yet the tenor of his writings evinces a generosity of feeling, warm affection, loyalty, and a certain nobleness, especially captivating when contrasted with the pettiness and chicanery that usually deform political aspirants. The permanency of his early attachments, his liberal and

unostentatious kindness to indigent genius—as exhibited in the instances of Barry and Crabbe, his "desperate fidelity" to Hamilton, and his intense parental anguish, indicate how sincere was the sensibility and devotedness that breathe in his works. Even Johnson's arbitrary will was soothed to courteous abeyance by Burke. Few passages in the latter's writings are more characteristic than his defence of nobility. His veneration for the time-hallowed, the renowned, the sublime in nature and association, is revealed by his reflections, as a youth, on first entering Westminster Abbey; and by the solemn beauty of his pleadings for the sacred and the venerable. It was not a trick of rhetoric for such a man to lament the decline of chivalry. Noble sentiments were his birthright, and he knew from experience the mortification of realizing that the age in which he lived denied them scope, and that the people with whom he mingled often exhibited a hopeless incapacity of recognition in their behalf. He intuitively discerned, also, the cold selfishness of a mere theorist —"Nothing can be conceived," he writes, "more hard than the heart of a thorough metaphysician."

But the excellence of Burke's heart is most admirably evinced in his eloquent advocacy of sentiment —in its highest significance, as essential to the dignity and progress of man. This is one of those peculiarities that distinguish the universal from the partisan writer, and justify the declaration of Mackintosh, that Burke was the most philosophical of

statesmen. It also explains why the most satisfactory revelation of his genius was colloquial. There was too much nature in him for acquirement to overlay, or for diplomacy to pervert, and the less artificial the medium the greater the exuberance of his mind. He recognised the normal not less than the temporary in humanity; and felt that the beautiful and endearing in social existence was not less a vital interest of his race than the principles of government. Hence he reproaches the French innovators in terms of the most attractive yet lofty wisdom: "All the pleasing illusions which made power gentle and obedience liberal, which harmonized the different shades of life, and which, by a bland assimilation, incorporated into politics, the sentiments which beautify and soften private society, are to be dissolved by this new, conquering empire of light and reason. All the decent drapery of life is to be rudely torn off; all the superadded ideas, furnished from the wardrobe of a moral imagination, which the heart owns and the understanding ratifies as necessary to cover the defects of our naked, shivering nature, and to raise it to dignity in our own estimation, are to be exploded as a ridiculous, absurd, and antiquated fashion."

It is generally admitted that the most successful oratory disappoints in the reading, not only from the absence of elocutionary charms, but on account of the somewhat exaggerated terms, which, though orally impressive, will not bear the calm eye of meditation. One of the greatest proofs of Burke's originality as

a rhetorician, is that his speeches are so effective on perusal. There is substantial thought enough to sustain whatever ornament he chooses to display; and the direct manner which the habit of public address induces, only gives vitality to his writings, without, in the slightest degree, lessening their dignity as deliberate compositions. The philosopher and the poet are co-evident in his most felicitous efforts; the reason and the sentiment of the question alternate; and we often enjoy while communing with him the delightful consciousness of having our judgment convinced and our sympathies won, at the same time. This union of delicacy and power is almost unprecedented. To be vivid and profound is seldom the distinction of the same writer. We instinctively separate in literature the two characteristics, and turn to one class of authors for emotion and to another for thought, as if to invent and to argue equally well, were scarcely to be expected from the same individual. From Burke, however, may be gleaned the most dry and perspicuous collocation of facts, the strongest array of reasons, the most imaginative conceptions, and the most touching pictures. His most universal charm is a style so copious as to enrich the student's vocabulary by the aptitude and flow of words, to gratify the taste by its elegance, and the ear by its musical periods. Withal it is a manly style. Burke is not fastidious in his choice of epithets or illustrations to the extent of weakening his force of statement. He can use the most homely as

well as the most classic phrases and figures. He does not sacrifice truth to beauty, but aims to render them mutually illustrative. Few English writers boast passages that exhibit so clearly the dignity of the language, its facility of application, and its persuasive grace. It is on this account that meagre extracts do him little justice. Thus read, he might be sometimes thought bombastic, sometimes verbose, and occasionally too colloquial or too stilted; but perused consecutively, the language and manner keep pace so deftly with the course of the argument and the successive phases of the question, that the entire effect is singularly harmonious and satisfactory; and the mind is animated and tempered as by a lofty strain of melody, uttered by a deep, yet sweet voice, "when on the singer's lip expires the finished song." To this union of consummate ability with earnest and just feeling, is referable the extraordinary balance of fancy and sense, the practical and the poetical in Burke. His mind was essentially speculative, he delighted in curious observation, his range of inquiry was broad and refined; yet to public affairs he brought a calm, practical judgment, a sobriety of mood, a perception of the actual relations of things, and the absolute claims of an exigency, as if he had been wont to deal only in matters of fact, and had drawn every lesson from stern experience. This is the more remarkable in one who could, at pleasure, indulge in such excursions of imagination and sentiment. An able critic has declared that in the latter regard he was "unapproached by any orator;" and

the wonder is that the reasoning acumen and profundity co-existed with this capacity, in equal power. To this uncommon alliance of gifts we ascribe his moderation. When the views of Fox and Pitt were quoted in opposition to his own, he said—"I prefer the collective wisdom of ages to the abilities of any two men living." He would go all lengths with no party, nor yield implicit faith to any mortal. He was too comprehensive to please a faction; and the more general his subject and the less connected with temporary objects, the more triumphant his discussion of it. There was, therefore, no little truth in the famous line in which Goldsmith summed up the career of his illustrious friend:—"he gave up to party what was meant for mankind;" for the reader of the present day, to whom many of the questions to which he was devoted are comparatively indifferent, cannot but lament that historical, ethical, or philosophical themes of vast and lasting interest, had not exclusively employed his pen. The essay on the "Sublime and Beautiful," and the work on the French Revolution, by their immediate reference to natural and social truths, elicited his finest powers; and eloquently suggest how admirably such discussions were adapted both to his abilities and his taste. Here and there, indeed, throughout his speeches, opportunities arise for expatiating on a universal truth or an important principle, which he always seizes with the avidity of a mind to which isolated details and transient causes are a hindrance, and the perspective of great ideas a necessary inspiration.

The Scholar.

MARK AKENSIDE.

THERE is a fine engraved likeness of Akenside, after a portrait by Pond, in the illustrated Memoirs of eminent British Physicians, which we can readily believe authentic from its severe and chaste lineaments. They are stamped with intelligence, pride, and refinement;—but, with something of the delicate outline of Raphael's face, they are destitute of that tender expression which makes his features almost angelic. It is a countenance very indicative of intellectual nobility,—breathing of self-subsistence and an aspiring mood. Its beauty is that of mind and rectitude rather than of sensibility and enthusiasm.

Akenside belongs to the classical species of men—those who regard order as essential and strive to harmonize, by a nice standard, the products of thought. It is a class almost obsolete. So many conflicting agencies act upon the mind in this age of social excitement, that one must isolate himself, if he would conform to a strict discipline either of moral feeling or intellectual taste. In fact, it is observable that characters that instinctively seek the smooth and trimmed pathway of refined and scholarly culture,

are usually considered proud, reserved, and impracticable. They seem to constitute a kind of mental aristocracy, and are truly genial only with their peers. This results from the very nature of the case. It is quite impossible for one who is sensitive and aspiring to mingle with the crowd, unless he "quenches the familiar smile with an austere regard of control." The refinement of perception and elevated ideal of sentiment, which we admire in the writings and converse of such men, is, in no small degree, owing to the fact that they have kept apart from the herd and never long been in intimate contact with inferior minds. The entrenchments of self-respect so forbidding to the uninitiated, often conceal rare social graces. The chill barrier of reserve—like the Alpine snows—not unfrequently hides the most lovely flowers; and the sympathies that are repressed, in one direction—like the stream prisoned in a buried aqueduct—only gush more loftily at the chosen outlet. Hence it is somewhat unreasonable to complain of the fastidious tastes and stiff manners of those whose works are chiefly attractive from their dainty or grand qualities. These exist by virtue of the discrimination of their authors; and we scarcely expect the same individual to be a delicate limner or a sublime bard, and a jovial companion to strangers, or a felicitous conformist to ordinary circumstances. There must always be extremes both of appreciation and prejudice in regard to men of a classical turn, according as they are judged by those who fraternize

with them, or such as only approach the battlements of pride.

Mark Akenside was the subject of this diversity of judgment; for while our biographer—with whom he had only professional intercourse—dwells on his solemn air, his stiffly-curled wig, precise attire, and petulant requisitions;—the friend to whom he candidly revealed himself, speaks of his table-talk, on a summer-day, as overflowing with the noblest sentiments, in language worthy of Plato. One of his acquaintance says he looked as if he could never be undressed; while another seems oblivious of his personal traits in noting the eloquence of his conversation. We have a key, however, to his social character in the single trait ascribed to him by Bucke—that "he hated to be all things to all men." This feeling involves a moral principle as well as a law of taste. It is doubtless true that coarse, ignorant and petty minds are repulsive to such a man as Akenside, merely because they incessantly offend taste; but he possessed also a quality which often accompanies delicacy of feeling,—and that is integrity. His nature rebelled against hypocrisy. He knew, by experience, the whole significance of true friendship; and he could not profane her sacred name. To conform for the mere sake of popularity, appeared to him unmanly and dishonest. His nature would not overflow in the presence of strangers, because pride was far more active within him than vanity. He was emphatically

one of that order of men whose happiness is less promoted by display than self-respect.

Accordingly, his foibles were those of pride. He would never have been liked by the philanthropic literati of our day. They would have thought him sadly deficient in humanity. And yet, although he could not go near the heart of poverty like Crabbe, or touch the inner springs of human emotion like Burns, or identify himself with the common and minute in nature like Wordsworth—he is declared by those who best knew him, to have been singularly benevolent and just. His cast of mind was elegant, his tone of feeling refined, and hence it was impossible for his sympathies to be universal, or his associations indiscriminate. These characteristics, however, served a poetical office. They enabled him to lose himself in high contemplations, to live in a comprehensive sphere of ideas, to enter into affinity with the choicest spirits of the past, to minister to the improvement of the aspiring, and habitually to rise above degrading and limited views. Even democrats and humanitarians must have patience with this species of aristocracy on account of its intellectual bequests. Elegance is not merely conventional; taste is not wholly selfish; nor does exclusiveness necessarily imply contempt for others; they are sometimes associated with the same degree, though a different kind of nobility of soul, which we honour in rustic bards and peasant-heroes; and by such would be recognised, though in the guise of the scholar and

the gentleman. There is a physiological as well as a metaphysical truth in Akenside's description of persons, "whose souls but half inform their bodies;" and a justifiable reason for his impatience in their society. Expression, as a human attribute, depends upon the activity of the soul as manifest in organization; and personal sympathy is nothing more than that relation between individuals through which they mutually quicken and call forth one another's thoughts and emotions. There are those whose material frames seem but partially vital with moral life, who do not assimilate the nutritive elements yielded by nature and society; and hence, are in a crude, inharmonious state. Such people make the most uncomfortable drafts upon more sensitive and complete beings. It really appears as if there was an unconscious attempt to make up their deficient consciousness—or, to recur to Akenside's figure, inform the other half of their bodies with the spiritual force of their companion. According to the magnetisers, this is an unfair process. Such individuals weigh, like an incubus, upon the animal spirits of those more finely organized; or drain, even to inanition, their "mens divinior;" and it is to this that the poet alludes.

The classicism, if we may so call it, of Akenside, betrayed itself in his fastidious habits, his chirography, and his elegant quotations; and is pleasantly evinced in such terms of expression as "Tully's curule chair." He acknowledges with zeal, his ambition to

> Tune to Attic themes the British lyre,

and exclaims, with the zest of a scholar,

> From the bower
> Where wisdom sat with her Athenian sons,
> Could but my happy hand entwine a wreath
> Of Plato's olive with the Mantuan bay!

Yet occasionally the recondite gives way to the natural; and a fine image reveals the true poetic impulse. Thus, in analyzing beauty, he has this exquisite figure,

> The third ascent
> To symmetry adds colour; thus the pearl
> Shines in the concave of its purple bed,
> And painted shells along some winding shore
> Catch, with indented folds, the glancing sun.

But more frequently his metaphors are drawn from the past. There is a fine instance of this in the description of the variety of human tastes and avocations:

> For as old Memnon's image long renowned
> Through fabling Egypt, at the genial touch
> Of morning, from its inmost frame sent forth
> Spontaneous music, so doth nature's hand
> To certain attributes which matter claims,
> Adapt the finer organs of the mind.

That the peculiar social theory we have designated, was native to Akenside, his poem vividly suggests; and it is equally apparent that he justified exclusive-

ness and reserve on the principle of self-improvement and love of the true and beautiful:

> Nor be my thoughts
> Presumptuous counted, if amid the calm
> Which Hesper sheds along the vernal heaven,
> If I, from vulgar superstition's walk
> Impatient steal, and from the unseemly rites
> Of splendid adulation, to attend
> With hymns thy presence in the sylvan shade,
> By their malignant presence unprofaned.

> Raise me above the vulgar's breath,
> Pursuit of fortune, fear of death,
> *And all in life that's mean;*
> Still true to reason be my plan,
> Still let my actions speak the man,
> Through every various scene.

His literary preferences point in the same direction. He was a lover of Plato and Cicero among the ancients,—of Shaftesbury in modern literature, and of Timoleon as an epic character. It is equally manifest in his sense of the desirableness of "composure and stillness;" and in the fact, which has been truly cited, that, in his writings, "his allusions to himself are always in the best style of egotism." Indirectly, too, we find the same indications in his sensitiveness in regard to his humble birth. He was mortified, like Byron, at the hitch in his gait—not for itself as a personal deformity, but on account of its having been caused, when a child, by the fall of one of his father's cleavers—and thus becoming a memorial of the paternal craft—that of a butcher.

In this species of character there is, indeed, an inevitable deficiency of popular qualities. It implies a want of general adaptation, and is equally opposed to the facility of address which belongs to the courtier, and the fruitfulness in expedients so requisite for the diplomatist. As a consequence of such a nature, the self-love of those whom the individual approaches, is often wounded. His mood sometimes exercises an indomitable supremacy; or rather he is possessed by his idiosyncrasy. Instead of observing the peculiarities of others with a view of disarming and conciliating them, he is absorbed, concentrated, individual. Unless there exists a point of sympathy or a capacity of recognition between him and a companion, they part as much strangers as they came together. There must be a vivid perception of the latent and the estimable in character, a wisdom or a generosity of soul in the one, to avoid a harsh or narrow judgment of the other. In a word, society should be composed of heroes or philosophers to afford any vantage-ground for these seemingly impracticable men: whereas it is confessedly an arena where the first law is to set aside personality and yield implicit obedience to Bentham's doctrine—"the greatest good to the greatest number." It is quite impossible to advocate the claims of this class on general social grounds: the only way to defend them from severe reprobation is by showing that the want of aptitude for popularity, does not, as a thing of course, include the absence of noble and loveable

characteristics—a truth which the thoughtless invariably overlook. So far from this being the case, there actually exists an order of gifted men who have sedulously acted on the principle, that a kind of voluntary monachism is essential to the integrity of being. It is this very course which has occasioned the discussion in regard to Goethe's goodness of heart. A certain unapproachableness beyond the outworks of self—a warding off of extreme confidence—a kind of abeyance of the sympathies—was ever observable in him, and has been remarked of many gifted persons. It is a significant anecdote which records a bet once proposed and accepted at a party of Washington's friends—that one should approach him, in company, with a friendly slap on the shoulder. The thing, it is true, was done, but so awkwardly, and followed by such entire discomfiture from the General's look of quiet surprise—that instant repentance followed. We do not quarrel with the moral dignity indicated by this circumstance—so appropriate to the high aims and exalted position of the matchless chief, and yet, by a curious perversity, make no allowance for the shrinking temperament, isolated consciousness, and refined instincts of those whose intellectual endowments and physical organization make retirement of manner and individuality of life absolutely necessary. That there is much of utility sacrificed by the process is undeniable; that an apparently culpable want of consideration for the feelings and enjoyments of others is

suggested, we cannot but admit. But, when the inadequacy is meekly confessed—when we remember how, in the early ages of Christianity, it was so universally deemed right for such social tyros to adopt a conventual life; when we reflect that no human beings have won such devoted love from the few, and left such priceless legacies to the world;—it seems both inconsiderate and ungrateful to utter reproaches, or weigh their merits in the same balance with those who never discovered in themselves any obstacle to being "all things to all men."

There is a famous repartee of a friend of Akenside, while discussing with him the claims of medicine, that "the ancients endeavoured to make a science of it and failed; and the moderns to make it a trade and succeeded." The poet, however, entertained a high idea of the dignity of his art. He regarded it in the broad light of philosophy—as based upon the laws of nature and susceptible of infinite advancement. His manners doubtless unfitted him for practical success in a pursuit demanding the utmost felicity of address and tact in intercourse; but there is no question that his inquiring and well-stored mind, and his habits of intense reflection, eminently fitted him to discover, while his literary skill enabled him to promulgate the truths of science.

It is said that his poetical reputation diminished his medical authority. The world appears extremely disinclined to accord any practical success to those endowed with superior imaginations. The injustice

of this prejudice has been often refuted in the case of accountants, clergymen, and lawyers, who have been favourites of the muse; but there is, perhaps, no instance to which it applies with so little force as that of a physician. His daily business opens a vast and peculiar field of observation, both in regard to nature and man. He sees the mysteries of the heart laid bare by the encroachments of pain and the approach of death. He has to do with his race under the least artificial conditions; and it is his vocation to study the varied influences which operate on the mind. He is near the mother "when she feels, for the first time, her first-born's breath." He witnesses the last fitful flashes of reawakened memory, when departing age lives over, at life's close, the scenes enacted at its dawn. The benign and gifted physician is a priest at the altar of humanity, and it is, therefore, only strange that her oracles do not more frequently inspire poetical, as they continually do scientific revelations. There are, too, some charming literary associations connected with the profession. The names of Garth and Arbuthnot are intimately blended with those of Pope and Swift; and Akenside and Armstrong and Darwin have left poems which do as much credit to their discernment as liberal followers of the healing art, as to their powers of imagination. It is, indeed, true, that in extensive practice in a career which exacts so much both from intellect and heart, as well as physical strength, as that of medicine, it is next to impossible

to prosecute ably any great literary undertaking; but where time permits, the studies and relations incident to the profession, are, in no degree, incompatible with but rather favourable to poetry. Hence Apollo was equally the god of song and physic. Notwithstanding the prejudice to which we have alluded as entertained by Akenside's biographers, he seems to have maintained no common rank with his cotemporaries. We infer this from the fact that he filled several public medical offices, and contributed numerous important papers to the medical literature of the day. His long poem was chiefly written during the first years of his professional life—when comparative leisure and seclusion left him free to expatiate in the realm of fancy. After he settled in Bloomsbury Square and engaged in the severe labours of a London practitioner, it was by an occasional ode alone, that he kept fresh his poetical vein.

There is no doubt that the poet was eminent in his profession, although he never became what is termed "a fashionable doctor." His treatises are yet consulted. The systematic habits, thoroughly respectable position, and undeviating rectitude of Akenside form a refreshing contrast to the vagabondism of some of his country's poets. We have no melancholy retrospect of servility—no maudlin rhymes of the inebriate,—no supercilious patron or infected jail to mar the brightness of his image; and we confess the imputation of coldness, formality, and

an irritable mood, seem to us a far less painful offset to poetical glory than the sullen bigotry of Young, the recklessness of Savage, the morbid despair of Coleridge, or the foolish excesses of Byron.

The external history of Akenside is singularly devoid of incident. His birthplace was Newcastle-upon-Tyne; he was destined for the church by his parents, who were rigid Presbyterians; but the plan was soon relinquished. He was born on the 9th of November, 1721, wrote and published verses at the age of sixteen, two years after became a student of medicine at Edinburgh, visited Leyden, and resided first at Northampton, but removed to Hampstead. The Pleasures of Imagination appeared in 1744, when the author was in his twenty-third year. It at once established his fame as a poet, was translated into French by Baron d'Holbach, and into Italian by Mazza. In London, he frequented both clubs and assemblies; and, while in the enjoyment of a high reputation, a desirable practice, a moderate competency, choice friends and rare intellectual resources, he died at the age of forty-nine.—But the real character of a genuine poet needs not the illustration of circumstances, if any deliberate effusion of his genius remains. In the "Pleasures of Imagination" we at once discover the spirit, tastes, convictions, and abilities of Akenside. The elevation of mind characteristic of high natures everywhere reveals itself. He was an aspirant in the best sense of the word. He realized not less from consciousness than obser-

vation, the capacity of progress and virtue innate in man. The sentiment of veneration was fervent in his heart. His instincts pointed upward. He possessed the most invaluable of the poetic tendencies —that of exalted faith in the attributes and destiny of humanity:

> For, from the birth
> Of human kind, the Sovereign Maker said
> That not in humble, nor in brief delights,
> Not in the fleeting echoes of renown,
> Power's purple robes, nor pleasure's flowery lap,
> The soul shall find contentment, but from thence
> Turning disdainful to an equal good,
> Through Nature's opening walks enlarge her aims
> Till every bound at length shall disappear,
> And infinite perfection fill the scene.

The moral heroism which emanates from such views, also inspired Akenside. He strove

> Against the torrent and the stubborn hill,
> To urge free virtue's steps, and to her side
> *Summon that strong divinity of soul*
> *Which conquers chance and fate.*

He experienced the usual extremes of critical estimation. Pope advised Dodsley, who submitted to him the manuscript of his poem, to offer "no niggardly price, as this was no every-day writer." Boucke declares the ode to Lord Huntingdon the finest in the language,—an opinion in amusing contrast with the characteristic dialogue between Johnson and Boswell, which appears to us one of the

most striking instances recorded of the prejudice of the one and the presumption of the other:

J. I see they have published a splendid edition of Akenside's works. One bad ode may be suffered, but a number of them makes one sick.

B. Akenside's distinguished poem is on the Imagination, but for my part, I could never admire it so much as most people do.

J. Sir, I could not read it through.

B. I have read it through, but could observe no great power in it.

This poem is a favourite with that class of readers who delight in beholding the muse arrayed in the dignity of learning, who have an intense desire for ideas in distinction from fancies, and love to encounter the great facts of nature and history in the midst of graceful and impressive numbers. Akenside pleases the learned and philosophic more than Wordsworth or Campbell. He abounds in classical allusions and expatiates most freely in the sphere of metaphysical speculation. Take, for instance, his view of the utility of beauty.

> The general mother conscious how infirm
> Her offspring tread the paths of good and ill,
> Thus, to the choice of credulous desire,
> Doth objects the completest of their tribe
> Distinguish and commend.
> * * * * *

In the following passage we find the eclecticism of the genuine artist finely indicated:

—— Whose proud desires from Nature's homely toil
Oft turn away fastidious; asking still
His mind's high aid to purify the form
From gross communion; to secure for ever
From the meddling hand of chance
Or rude decay, her features; and to add
Whatever ornaments may suit her mien,
Where'er he finds them scattered through the paths
Of nature or of fortune.

There is a want of simplicity in Akenside, a needless introversion of phrases, and a display of erudition, which though often effective and rhetorical, is in remarkable contrast to the more artless imagery of later English poets. Indeed, he was at first distinguished as an orator. It is related that Robertson, the historian, regularly attended the debates of a medical club, in order to hear Akenside speak.

We can find no adequate cause for the inference that Akenside was a celibate from indifference. On the contrary, the evidence is decisive that he was a man of unaffected and deep sentiment. In one edition of his poems, there is prefixed a frontispiece representing a richly attired cavalier stretched upon a couch, and waving off a descending Cupid; beneath it is inscribed the quotation,—

Away, away,
Tempt me no more, insidious Love!

But if we turn to Akenside's writings, we discover that it was not scorn but disappointment which induced this renunciation. He twice fixed his affec-

tions, and in both instances, the objects were summoned to an early tomb. Such passages as the following evince great natural tenderness and devotion:

> Who that bears
> A human bosom, hath not often felt
> How dear are all those ties which bind our race
> In gentleness together, and how sweet
> Their force, let fortune's wayward hand the while
> Be kind or cruel?
> Ask the faithful youth
> Why the cold urn of her whom long he loved,
> So often fills his arms; so often draws
> His lonely footsteps silent and unseen,
> To pay the mournful tribute of his tears?
> Oh! he will tell thee that the wealth of worlds
> Should ne'er seduce his bosom to forego
> Those sacred hours, when stealing from the noise
> Of care and envy, sweet remembrance soothes,
> With virtue's kindest looks, his aching breast,
> And turns his tears to rapture.

In his apostrophe to the Beautiful, after describing her course through the vegetable and animal world, he declares,

> At length her favourite mansion and her throne
> She fixed in woman's form.

He elsewhere calls her "chief of terrestrial creatures." Still more personal allusions occur in the minor pieces:—

> Too much my heart of beauty's power has known,
> Too long to love hath reason left her throne;

Too long my genius mourned his myrtle chain,
And three rich years of youth consumed in vain.

Let the busy or the wise
View him with contemptuous eyes,
  Love is native to the heart;
Guide its wishes as you will,
Without love you'll find it still
  Void in one essential part.

Me, though no peculiar fair
Touches with a lover's care,
  Though the pride of my desire
Asks immortal Friendship's name,
Asks the palm of honest fame;
  And the old heroic lyre;

Though the day hath smoothly gone,
Or to lettered leisure known,
  Or in social duty spent,
Yet, at eve, my lonely breast
Seeks in vain for perfect rest,
  Languishes for true content.

But if he was not permitted to enjoy domestic happiness, he was favoured, beyond the common lot, in having a rich and satisfactory experience of friendship. The Invocation to the Pleasures of Imagination gives us no overdrawn picture of the manly confidence, the permanent esteem, and unvarying affection, which united Akenside and Dyson. Proud as the former confessedly was, he felt no scruple in allowing the latter, in his prosperity, to act towards him the part of a benefactor; and intimate as was their relation for many years, Dyson never would

give to the public a feature of his friend's character or an incident of his private life. These two facts prove that entire trustfulness and instinctive delicacy —at once so rare and so essential to thorough amity, actually existed in this case.

While the poet lived he enjoyed an annuity from his friend sufficient to release him from pecuniary anxiety; and when he died that friend was his exclusive legatee. It is a beautiful picture—rivalling those of antiquity so near to the sympathies of the poet—and reproving the scepticism which a sordid age has engendered in regard to human friendship. Mutual respect, confidence, admiration, and love, brightened the intercourse of these noble men, until it was interrupted by death, to be enshrined for ever, without a doubt or blemish, on the page of a standard poem.

> Now the Fates
> Have other tasks imposed. To thee, my friend!
> The ministry of Freedom, and the faith
> Of popular decrees in early youth,
> Not vainly they committed. Me they sent
> To wait on pain, and silent arts to urge
> Inglorious, not ignoble if my cares,
> To such as languish on a grievous bed,
> Ease, and the sweet forgetfulness of ill
> Conciliate; nor delightless, if the Muse
> Her shades to visit, and to taste her springs,—
> If some distinguished hours the bounteous Muse
> Impart, and grant (what she and she alone
> Can grant to mortals) that my hand those wreaths
> Of fame, and honest favour, which the blessed

Wear in Elysium, and which never felt
The breath of envy or malignant tongues,
That these my hand *for thee and for myself*
May gather.

P. I., i. 68.

O, my faithful friend!
O early chosen, ever found the same,
And trusted and beloved! once more, the verse
Long destined, always obvious to thine ear,
Attend indulgent: so, in latest years,
When time thy head with honours shall have clothed,
Sacred to even virtue, may thy mind,
Amid the calm review of seasons past,
Fair offices of friendship, or kind peace,
Or public zeal:—may then thy mind, well pleased,
Recall these happy studies of our prime.

Well may a man who could thus appreciate, from experience, the beauty of the sentiment, inquire—

Is aught so fair
In all the dewy landscapes of the spring,
The summer's noontide groves, the purple eve,
At harvest home, or in the frosty moon
Glittering on some smooth sea, is aught so fair
As virtuous friendship?

He had the good sense to devote himself to an honourable and useful profession, knowing that systematic employment was essential to content and respectability; but no poet ever entertained more sincere reverence for the art, or better appreciated its ennobling influence on individual character and the progress of society, as a few allusions will prove:

Nor shall ever
The graver tasks of manhood, or the advice
Of vulgar wisdom, move me to disclaim
Those studies which possessed me in the dawn
Of life, and fixed the colour of my mind
For every future year: whence even now
From sleep I rescue the clear hours of morn,
And, while the world around lies overwhelm'd
In idle darkness, am alive to thoughts
Of honourable fame, of truth divine
Or moral, and of minds to virtue won
By the sweet magic of harmonious verse.

The bard, nor length, nor depth,
Nor place, nor form controls. Him the hours,
The seasons him obey: and changeful time
Sees him at will keep measure with his flight,
At will outstrip it. His prevailing hand
Gives to corporeal essence life's sense
And every stately function of the soul.
The soul itself to him obsequious lies,
Like matter's passive heap; and as he wills,
To reason and affection he assigns
Their just alliances; their just degrees:
Hence his peculiar honours; hence the race
Of men who people his delightful world,
Men genuine and according to themselves,
Transcend as far the uncertain sons of earth,
As earth itself to his delightful world
The palm of spotless beauty doth resign.

Who trained by laws the future age,
Who rescued nations from the rage
Of partial, factious power,
My heart with distant homage views;
Content if thou, celestial muse,
Didst rule my natal hour!

The fluctuations of taste in poetry, have brought into vogue highly-finished and concentrated lyric effusions. Didactic verse, especially that involving a long, continuous argument, attracts but few. Pope, Cowper, and Wordsworth have each, in different ways, succeeded in obtaining a permanent niche in the temple of Fame by such efforts; and the claims of Akenside are equally original, though not, perhaps, so widely acknowledged. One reason for this is the abstract nature of his theme, which is essentially mental and moral philosophy. Such discussions naturally give a certain dryness and involution to the metre. It requires implicit attention and some familiarity with or interest in both ethics and metaphysics, to be fully appreciated by the reader. The length of his chief poem almost entailed occasional dulness. Yet there are scattered through it numerous examples of graceful and effective language. He calls science,

> The substitute
> Of God's own wisdom in this toilsome world,
> The providence of man.

And describes the envious, as

> The owl-eyed race
> Whom virtue's lustre blinds.

He calls the flush of the banquet

> Roses taught by wine to bloom.

And quaintly declares that whenever the lethargic mind of Holland awakens,

> She breathes maternal fogs to damp its restless flame.

Artificial, as he must be acknowledged, in the ode, the blank verse of Akenside has rare and characteristic merits unsurpassed in English poetry. There is sometimes a felicity of diction, a vigour and richness of phrase, which reminds us of the choicest passages in the old dramatists. The thought is expressed with eloquent intensity,—a terse, yet flowing collocation of words—that strikes at once imagination and reason, and leaves an harmonious impression on the memory. The following extracts are random examples:

> Hence Ambition climbs
> *With sliding feet and hands impure to grasp*
> *Those solemn toys which glitter in his view*
> *On fortune's rugged steep;* hence pale Revenge
> Unsheaths his murderous dagger: Rapine hence
> And envious Lust, by venal fraud upborne,
> Surmount the reverend barrier of the laws,
> Which kept them from their prey.

> But worse than these
> I deem, far worse, than other race of ills
> Which humankind rear up among themselves,—
> *That horrid offspring which misgoverned will*
> *Bears to fantastic error.*

> Therefore was his breast
> Fenced round with passions quick to be alarmed,
> Or stubborn to oppose; with *fear more swift*
> *Than beacons catching flame from hill to hill,*

When armies land; with anger uncontrolled
As the young lion bounding on his prey,
With sorrow that locks up the struggling heart;
And shame, that overcasts the drooping eye
As with a cloud of lightning.

—— When the Muses haunt
The marble porch where Wisdom wont to talk
With Socrates or Tully, hears no more
Save the hoarse jargon of contentious monks,
Or female superstition's midnight prayer;
When ruthless Havoc from the hand of Time
Tears the destroying scythe, with surer stroke
To mow the monuments of glory down;
Till Desolation o'er the grass-grown street
Expands her raven wings, and from the gate
Where senates once the weal of nations planned,
Hisseth the gliding snake through hoary weeds
That clasp the mouldering column.

—— From whose lips
Flowed eloquence, which, *like the vows of love,*
Could steal away suspicion from the hearts
Of all who listened.

Still the warbling flute
Presided o'er the combat, breathing strains
Grave, solemn, soft; and *changing headlong spite*
To thoughtful resolution cool and clear.

—— How I fared
Or whither turned, I know not; nor recall
Aught of those moments other than the sense
Of one who struggles in oppressive sleep,
And from the toils of some distressful dream
To break away with palpitating heart,
Weak limbs, and temples bathed in deathlike dew,
Makes many a painful effort.

Akenside's mind was of a comprehensive order. He preferred generalities to details. It is admitted that, notwithstanding the *hauteur* of his manner at the bedside of hospital patients, he prescribed with consummate ability: and the marked aversion he expressed for virtuosos, indicates how completely broad and elevated tastes were identified in his view with a manly intellect. He aimed to survey

> All the many tracts
> Of passion and opinion,

rather than to describe Nature minutely, or give utterance to playful fancies. Indeed, his sense of humour was deficient, and it was quite accordant with his cast of mind to deem a jest unbecoming a gentleman.

Yet he attached an important office to ridicule, and there was a vein of satire in his nature, which occasionally appears in his writings. In his opinion, this weapon enacts no small part in vanquishing error; and the history of literature justifies the idea.

> Ask we for what fair end the Almighty sire
> In mortal bosoms stirs this gay contempt,
> These grateful pangs of laughter; from disgust
> Educing pleasure? Wherefore but to aid
> The tardy steps of reason, and at once
> By this prompt impulse urge us to depress
> Wild folly's aims? For though the sober light
> Of truth flow dawning on the watchful mind,
> At length unfolds, through many a subtle tie,
> How these uncouth disorders end at last

In public evil; yet benignant heaven,
Conscious how dim the dawn of truth appears
To thousands, conscious what a scanty pause
From labour and from care the wider lot
Of humble life affords for studious thought
To scan the maze of nature, therefore stamped
These glaring scenes with characters of scorn,
As broad and obvious to the passing clown
As to the lettered sage's curious eye.

His genius, however, was more allied to the sublime than the vivacious. He had a deep love for nature; but it was for her laws, her general effects and grand combinations rather than her special beauties. Hence his descriptions, although often winsome, are vague, and partake more of thoughtful reverie than minute observation. He delighted to trace mental phenomena more than to paint elaborate landscapes. The metaphysician and naturalist are coevident with the scholar and aspirant in his verse.

It has, however, been objected to his poem that it does not clearly recognise Christianity, and has no definite allusion to immortality. The author, it is said, was a deist. We can readily believe that the form in which religion was presented to the poet in childhood, was anything but engaging either to his reason or affections; and the independence of his mind and uprightness of his character would naturally lead him to reject bigoted allegiance to any narrow theological creed. Yet there are few poets who have been more thoroughly imbued with the religious sentiment. If there is no direct appeal to

doctrines, in the "Pleasures of Imagination," there is, what seems to us far more appropriate, a pervading spirit of veneration and earnest love of truth. Indeed, the very scope of the poem is "to vindicate the ways of God to man," by unfolding the benign and wise principles which regulate the universe and develope the human soul. We are called upon to bow in meek intelligence to "the discipline of laws divine;" and the Deity is apostrophized as the

> Exhaustless fount of intellectual day,
> Centre of souls.

Immortality is everywhere suggested by the lofty attributes and progressive virtue — so eloquently described as the legitimate growth of our nature; and the abrupt termination of the poem, induces the belief that Akenside reserved the most spiritual arguments for the last.

> For to the brutes
> Perception and the transient boons of sense
> Hath fate imparted: but to man alone
> Of sublunary beings, was it given
> Each fleeting impulse on the sensual powers
> At leisure to review; with equal eye
> To scan the passion of the stricken nerve
> On the vague object striking; to conduct
> From sense, *the portal turbulent and loud*,
> *Into the mind's wide palace*, one by one
> The frequent, pressing, fluctuating forms,
> And question and compare them.
>
> * * * *
>
> —— A nobler dower
> Her sire at death decreed her; purer gifts

From his own treasure; forms which never deigned
In eyes or ears to dwell, within the sense
Of earthly organs; but sublime were placed
In his essential reason, leading there
That vast ideal host which all his works
Through endless ages never will reveal.

The Biographer.

FINAL MEMORIALS OF LAMB AND KEATS.*

THERE are aspects of literature which almost justify a noble mind in recoiling from its attractions. As the genuine record of individual experience, from the objective scenes of adventure to the most refined inward emotions,—as a legitimate contribution of ideas, on subjects of universal interest and immediate utility, and even as one of the fine arts,—giving scope to taste and invention in the combinations of imagery and the moulding of language,—there is an essential dignity in literature. But when we glance at its daily emanations, and perceive the crude, extravagant, and venal productions which bear its name, we cannot but impatiently turn to a green field, a leafless tree, or a distant cloud,—to any object or thought which, by its reality and truth to its own relations, freshens our spirits by manifesting the contrast between to be and to seem. The most important phase

* 1. Literary Sketches and Letters: being the Final Memorials of Charles Lamb, never before published. By Thomas Noon Talfourd, one of his executors. New York. D. Appleton & Co. 1848.

2. Life, Letters, and Literary Remains of John Keats. Edited by Richard Monckton Milnes. New York. George P. Putnam. 1848.

of literature is psychological. The letter, poem, or biography which opens to us the soul's arcana, without disguise or illusion, is one of those repositories through which we make sure advances toward primal truth. The secret and enduring charm of poetry is founded upon the idea that it is a deeper and more significant utterance than any other form of literature; that it is, by a kind of necessity, sincere—and breathes the most unalloyed spirit of beauty and truth. It is like a torch passed from hand to hand with fraternal care, because its flame was kindled at a divine altar; and should be preserved to enlighten and warm the universal heart. In proportion as the records of the mind are drawn from its inner recesses, and the revelations of the pen are individual, spontaneous, and genuine, they excite sympathy and deserve regard. The highest forms of literature, as an art, are shaped upon this principle—the drama being the intimate, and history the picturesque reflection of life. Hence Shakspeare has furnished a vocabulary for the passions and woes of men; in the pulpit, at the bar, and the fireside, in conviviality and bereavement—the utterances of his characters instinctively fly to the lips. One reason for the decline of the drama is that, in modern times, genius has so often written its own tragedy and comedy, in its actual development. We have been admitted so frankly into the life of beings, endowed with the keenest sensibilities and the richest intellects, that a drama, however imposing or brilliant, especially when

acted, seems comparatively inadequate and cold as a representation of human existence. What tragedy, for instance, ever written, can equal the pathos involved in these last memorials of Lamb and Keats? What chapter of mental philosophy more strikingly unfolds the mysterious laws of the moral nature than the glimpses here unfolded of inward struggles, intense consciousness, and life-long conflict with evils too sacred to be discussed until the sufferers had passed away? How tame and insignificant appear the outward obstacles, over which coarser natures triumph, compared to the secret misery which these gentle yet heroic men so long endured! The essence of Lear and Hamlet is here incarnated; and we realize perfectly how in beings so delicate and aspiring, in the grasp of a destiny so strange and mournful, suicidal reveries may alternate with comic talk.

It is also remarkable that "final memorials" should have appeared almost simultaneously, of two individuals peculiarly endeared to the lovers of originality of mind and grace of character: and the coincidence extends to many particulars. Each has been misinterpreted—the one as deficient in veneration, the other in courage; and in both instances the idea is triumphantly refuted—Lamb having guided himself by a severe line of duty based on reverence, and Keats given an uncommon example of fortitude. In each, too, pain was magnified and cheated of illusion by acute consciousness, in the one case of the latent

signs of mental aberration, and in the other, we are told, "his knowledge of anatomy made every change tenfold worse." The man who indited sportive comments on death, felt that he "*must* be religious;" and he who indulged in moods of sentimental languishment, with his dying gasp, reassured the sinking courage of his friend!

The philosophy of human suffering is, as yet, unwritten. Theological literature and poetry afford but glimpses whereby we may vaguely estimate its scope and subtlety; but the materials from which it is educed are chiefly to be discovered in volumes like these. The writings which these men chose to give to the world, form part of their artistic, deliberate, and expressed development; and as such have been analyzed and estimated by refined critics and loving readers. The facts of their career, and the unstudied, confidential letters of friendship, yield the necessary collateral light which brings into relief the native impulses of character, and furnishes the interpretation that the emanations of genius but partially, though exquisitely, revealed. Both have been fortunate in their biographers. Talfourd and Milnes, fitted by their kindred gifts to realize the intrinsic worth of their subjects, have brought together these scattered mementos and given them an intelligible shape, with the reverence, affection, and delicacy required for such a task. They come forth at an auspicious moment, when death has canonized the names, and time sealed the reputation of the essayist and poet; when

a growing taste for the higher qualities of mind has somewhat modified superficial and indiscriminate views of literature; and when the spirit of the age readily prepares the way for the reception of whatever vindicates and hallows the memory of those whom renown has made familiar. The facts of consciousness are, to the student of man and life, what the phenomena of nature are to the scientific observer. Lamb and Keats, both from idiosyncrasy and circumstances, realized and dwelt upon their inward experiences. Their outward lot baffled action only to intensify thought and emotion. "I love my sonnets," says the former, "because they are the reflected images of my feelings at different times." For the same reason his letters are interesting to us. We knew of his irksome clerkship, his economical lodgings, his delightful literary circle, his fraternal love,—and that it was his wont to "gather himself up into the old things." But we knew not of his unostentatious charities, nor of the darkest thread in the web of his destiny—the allusions to which, in this correspondence, shed a new and almost supernatural light upon the peculiarities of his genius.

These revelations are, indeed, eminently Shakspearean, especially in unfolding that mystical relation between humour and pathos, wherein the great dramatist approaches nearer than any other writer to the very heart of nature. Lamb's essays are remarkable for genial humour. He seems peculiarly to enjoy the quaint, ridiculous, and, if we may so call

it, relishing side of life. And yet his personal, domestic, familiar existence contained an element of profound wo. He relinquished in early youth his dream of love for ever, to watch over a sister afflicted with periodical fits of insanity, in one of which she had killed their mother. A situation more harrowing to a mind of rare susceptibility, is scarcely to be imagined; and it was from the appalling scenes of this tragic destiny that, by the instinct of self-preservation, the voluntary martyr fled, on the wings of fancy, into a realm of curious observation and playful wit. "I hope," he writes, "(for Mary I can answer) that I shall, through life, never have less recollection, nor a fainter impression of what has happened than I have now. It is not a light thing, nor meant by the Almighty to be received lightly. I must be serious, circumspect, and religious through life, and by such means may both of us escape madness in future, if it so please the Almighty!" A few significant passages give us a vivid idea of the extent and influence of his calamity. "Being by ourselves is bad, and going out is bad. I get so irritable and wretched with fear, that I constantly hasten on the disorder. You cannot conceive the misery of such a foresight." We know of no incident in the whole range of literary biography so startling and painful, as that here recorded of Lamb, associated as it is with the geniality and wit of Elia,—that, on one occasion, Lloyd met him and his sister—"slowly pacing together a little footpath in Hoxton fields, both weep-

ing bitterly, and found, on joining them, that they were taking their solemn way to the accustomed asylum!"

It is seldom that we thus clearly see the reciprocal interchange of humour and pathos—the one reacting on the other and thus maintaining the equilibrium of reason. Lamb's idolatry of Shakspeare and his metaphysical insight as regards the true principle of his creations, is thus explained. Few men ever realized, in their consciousness, such a testimony to the essential genuineness of the bard's conceptions. Others may interpret the moods of Hamlet, the murderous reveries of Macbeth, or the agony of Lear, through observation of human nature in general, or according to a code of philosophical criticism; but Lamb did so by his individual sympathies. Love, duty, and madness had pressed upon his earliest youth and wrestled in his manly and sensitive heart, robing life in a "sceptred pall," driving him to minor comforts, isolating his being, and, with a kind of dramatic facility, causing the day's oppressive responsibility to vibrate to the evening's airy mirth, as a huge and frowning mountain echoes the cheering notes of a horn.

The same characteristic is made known by the new memoir of Keats. His domestic bereavements, critical persecution, hopeless love, and physical suffering, combined with a temperament that quivered to every impression—afford a gloomy background to the picture of his life; and yet this is constantly

irradiated by his exquisite sense of beauty and flashes of humour. Nearly all that his letters suggest of the actual circumstances which environ him, is painful; while the very record is often so lively with hints of vast imaginative pleasure and sparkles of gay conceit, that the same relief is given to the sympathies which arises from the self-possessed energy of a well-delineated character in tragedy: pity is elevated into admiration; the struggle with fate appears grand; the resources of the victim lend a dignity to his misfortunes; and we have a latent feeling that it is "nobler in the mind to suffer" thus, than to stagnate in an ignoble prosperity.

The familiar epistles, like the conversation of the author,—"a delightful combination of earnestness and pleasantry,"—are quite satisfactory in exhibiting the thorough manliness of the poet's character. He possessed, indeed, all the traits which we associate with his vocation. His sentiments were candid, generous, free, and humane. All that the critics have said in regard to the carelessness and promise of his verse is included in his own just self-estimation, indicating at once a deep sense both of power and imperfection. "The faint conceptions," he says, "of poems to come, bring the blood frequently into my forehead;" and again, "I have written independently without judgment. I will write independently and with judgment hereafter." Yet he had his own theory of the art—founded upon the nature of his own gifts, from which no indiscriminate reproach

could drive him. "Poetry," he declares, "should surprise by a *fine excess* and not by singularity."

He evidently possessed the magnanimity of genius. "Is there no human dust-hole," he asked, in reference to some mean conduct,—"into which we can sweep such fellows?" And although he felt that "a man must have the fine point of his soul taken off to be fit for this world," it was not in the spirit of misanthropy that he looked upon his race. "I find there is no worthy pursuit," he writes, "but the idea of doing some good in the world." He alludes earnestly to the "ultimate glory of dying for a great human enterprise" as a prevailing desire, and eloquently observes, "Scenery is fine, but human nature is finer; the sward is richer for the tread of a real, nervous English foot; the eagle's nest is finer for the mountaineer having looked into it." In one letter he refers to his "delight in sensation" as an inferior state to his friend's "hunger after truth." But these elements—both essential to the poetic nature, were more happily blended in him than he seems to have considered. Time had not yet chastened the one, or made him vividly conscious of the other. With all his urbanity and ingenuousness, he confesses to that instinct of seclusion whereby, like the snail's shell, a protection is afforded such beings, in social intercourse, from what might otherwise wound or harden. "Think of my pleasure in solitude in comparison with my commerce with the world: there I am a child, there they do not know me,

not even my most intimate acquaintance; I give into their feelings as though I were refraining from imitating a little child. Some think me middling, others silly, others foolish; every one thinks he sees my weak side against my will, when in truth, *it is with my will.* I am content to be thought all this, because I have in my own breast so great a resource." He seems inclined in one letter to deny the individuality of genius, and, if we separate the quality or attributes so designated, from character, the position is tenable. It is, however, not unusual to confound the two. Keats recognised, probably from circumstances, the truth that intellectually as well as spiritually, the attitude of human being towards life and nature should be receptive. These psychological facts—the universal assimilating nature of genius and the recipient capacity of mind, are hinted with striking beauty, in the following passage: "Men of genius are great as certain ethereal chemicals operating on the mass of neutral intellect—but they have not any individuality, any determined character. Now it is more noble to sit like Jove than fly like Mercury:—let us not therefore go hurrying about and collecting honey, bee-like, buzzing here and there for a knowledge of what is to be arrived at; but let us open our leaves like a flower, and be passive and receptive, budding patiently under the eye of Apollo, and taking hints from every noble insect that favours us with a visit. Sap will be given us for meat and dew for drink."

"These pages," says Mr. Milnes, "concern one whose whole story may be summed up in the composition of three small volumes of verse, some earnest friendships, one passion, and a premature death." But to the reader of thought and feeling, how much is involved in the brief chronicle! The verse is chiefly dedicated to mythological fables; and yet the poet was ignorant of Greek, but adopting the heathen divinities, because around them he could freely throw the drapery of his imagination, he gives each a life more fresh and lovely than that afforded by the literature which embodies them; beings of a "creed outworn," he breathed into them the vitality of his own sensations, and thus placed the cold and brilliant gems of a Pagan theocracy, on the warm bosom of Christianized humanity. The distinction between genius and scholarship was never more eloquently revealed. The finish of the complete bard, is only occasionally manifest,—in the Eve of St. Agnes, for instance, and some of the sonnets; but the rich fancy, novel metaphor, and kindling aspiration gleam and glow on every page in wild luxuriance. We have elsewhere* discussed the claims of Keats as a poet, and the volume before us irresistibly attracts us to him as a man. The "earnest friendships" to which his biographer alludes, seem, from the letters to have been the great consolation of his life; and their ingenuous and manly exposition is a new evi-

* Thoughts on the Poets.

dence of that power, which seems the compensatory award of heaven for the inevitable sufferings of genius, to attach others to its possessors with singular tenacity and exclusiveness. The "one passion" of Keats confirms our belief in the individuality of affection of the poetical character. Its kindliness, admiration, and sympathies are, indeed, universal; and their exhibition is often mistaken for that of another sentiment. But the very characteristic of a poetic mind is concentration. It is the exercise of this faculty in which consists its power; and fearful is its intensity, when instead of being directed towards abstract theories or philanthropic aims, it becomes identified with a human object. Nothing more clearly indicates the absorbing nature of this experience in Keats, than his obvious avoidance of the subject, except when necessity compelled an allusion. It was the controlling thought of his mind, the haunting dream of his fancy, and the almost exclusive sentiment of his heart. The few hints which drop from his letters are enough to suggest a world of passionate emotion. That excessive sensibility to associations which is so characteristic of this feeling, makes us aware how alive he was to everything even remotely bearing on this subject. In one of his first letters from Italy, he says: "I can bear to die—I cannot bear to leave her. Oh, God! God! God! Everything I have in my trunks that reminds me of her goes through me like a spear. The silk lining she put in my travelling cap scalds my head.

There is nothing in the world of sufficient interest to divert me from her a moment. O that I could be buried near where she lives! It surprises me that the human heart is capable of containing and bearing so much misery as this." Mr. Milnes, with becoming delicacy, is silent in regard to the object of this "one passion," except to give the assurance that the consciousness of having inspired it, "has been a source of grave delight and earnest thankfulness through the changes and chances of her earthly pilgrimage." We allude to it chiefly to note what strikes us as a most touching instance of that want of recognition which seems to attend human beings in life, in proportion as they are ardent and genuine, —that, at the very time Keats was half-scorned as the victim of wounded self-love, his death was accelerated by the fervour of his devotion to another; and the thought of fame had no power to win his desires from the grave.

Of his "premature death," we have a more elaborate and authentic record than ever before. His sufferings were prolonged and severe; but, for an exile, he enjoyed the benefit of extraordinary medical skill and affectionate nurture. The celebrated Dr. Clarke was his constant attendant,—a generous artist, the friend of years, scarcely left his bedside; the sky of Rome canopies his grave, and Shelley wrote for him an immortal elegy. It is with the sensation of an intolerable pressure lifted from the heart, that we close the story. After tracing that

feverish life—its keen appreciation of the pleasurable in sensation, its ravishing sense of the beautiful in thought and nature, its noble impulses and constrained environment,—the eagerness of the soul and the fragility of the body—we see no happy goal for it on earth, scarcely a chance for harmonious tranquillity; and it is soothing to know that the ceaseless pleadings of that weary heart are stilled forever, beneath the daisy-grown turf!

We agree with his biographer in regarding the want of correspondence between the world of thought and that of action, as a benign law incident to human life and for a benign end. The gifts of Lamb and Keats redeemed their outward destiny; and in this great fact so impressively demonstrated in the volumes before us, we find a new and persuasive evidence of the innate worth of genius. To what realms of fancy and awe, to the sweet conviction of how many sublime truths, into amity with what rich and loving spirits, did the endowments of these men bring them! The shafts of misfortune were blunted against the panoply of serene thought, or foiled aside by elevation of sentiment or blitheness of fancy. There is a nobleness in their lives which all they endured from pain and calumny, only more clearly developed. That they "dwelt apart," like stars, was no infelicity; for the radiant glow that still comes to us from those glorious heights, is our best assurance that they did not suffer in vain.

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